

International

GEOFF BELL
LABOUR'S
IRISH
SPRING

PHIL HEARSE
SOCIALISM
AND
DISARMAMENT

PAT MASTERS
JANE SHALLICE
POLITICS
OF
PORNOGRAPHY

PETER FULLER
CRISIS IN ART

TARIQ ALI
ON
SHIRLEY
WILLIAMS

Peace with Ireland.

Labour's Proposals for a Settlement by Consent.

The National Executive of the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party have enunciated an alternative policy to that which is being pursued by the present Government to the deep dishonour of the British nation.

On the occasion of the third reading of the Government of Ireland Bill in the House of Commons on November 11, 1920, the Labour Party submitted, in the name of the British Labour Movement, the following proposals for the settlement of the Irish problem by agreement:—

- (a) That the British Army of Occupation be withdrawn.
- (b) That the question of Irish Government be relegated to an Irish Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of proportional representation by free, equal, and secret vote.
- (c) That the Constitution drawn up by the Assembly be accepted, provided—
 - (1) It affords protection to minorities; and
 - (2) Prevents Ireland becoming a military or naval menace to Britain.

Irish Labour supports British Labour's Peace Policy.

These proposals, which represent the policy of British Labour, have received the approval and endorsement of Irish Labour. On November 10, 1920, a National Conference of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress unanimously adopted a resolution declaring on behalf of the Irish Labour Movement its readiness to advocate the acceptance of this policy as being the fulfilment of Ireland's demand for the right to choose and decide its own form of Government.

The National Conference assured the British workers that the realisation of the policy outlined would lead to goodwill and fraternity between the two peoples.

THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IS NOT WELCOMED BY A SINGLE SECTION OF THE IRISH PEOPLE.

BRITISH LABOUR'S POLICY HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY IRISH LABOUR AND WILL LEAD TO GOODWILL AND FRATERNITY.

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MITTERRAND & BENN: SEIZE THE TIME

When Francois Mitterrand was elected President of France on 10 May, hundreds of thousands of young people crowded into the Place de la Bastille to cheer. Only three days earlier in Britain, the Labour Party romped home winning over 1,100 seats from the Tories in a local government election victory whose results were comparable to a 30 seat parliamentary majority in a general election.

The two results can not be weighed in the same balance. Mitterrand's victory represented an historic opening for the French working class: an opportunity to smash through the roadblock constituted by the Gaullist Fifth Republic. As the British press constantly reminded its readers, the local election gains were simply what one would expect at mid-term under an extremely unpopular Tory government.

Certain small features of both victories have a symptomatic significance for revolutionaries. Alain Krivine, the presidential candidate of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, was officially invited by the Socialist Party (SP) to speak on the platform of their victory rally. And in Britain, the first major public meeting addressed by Ken Livingstone, the new leader of the Greater London Council, was a rally organised by **Socialist Challenge**, the newspaper sponsored by the International Marxist Group.

The fact is that revolutionary ideas and revolutionaries themselves are more welcome in the ranks of most Social Democratic parties in Europe than they have been for decades. There is a growing radicalism inside these parties and, in contrast to the 1930s, Britain is not an exception but in many respects a pace-setter.

A response to the crisis

The prime factors underlying this development are the onset of a generalised recession in the mid-1970s and the austerity measures which have been the uniform response of the ruling class. It is becoming increasingly clear that the scale of the problems faced by the working class today cannot be tackled by a strategy based on industrial action alone.

The organisational strength of the workers' movement built up over the years and extended in a rapid burst of struggle after 1968 in France, Italy, Spain and Britain was sufficient to stop a direct imposition of the full cost of the crisis onto the working class. But it was unable to cope with the political offensive launched by the bourgeoisie, often with the support and co-operation of the Labour bureaucrats, in the years that followed.

In Portugal, the 'democratic counterrevolution' spearheaded by Antonio Soares' Socialist Party pushed the working class onto the defensive following the isolation of the revolutionary vanguard following the desperate 'coup' attempt of November 1975.

The possibility of a government of the workers' parties was blocked by the 'Historic Compromise' in Italy and delayed by the Communist Party's sectarianism in France. In Spain the class-collaborationist Moncloa Pact between the leaders of the trade unions and the government so weakened the workers' movement that there are today more people unemployed than there are organised in unions.

In Britain, the political momentum developed by the miners' strike which toppled Heath was dissipated through the defeat of the left in the EEC referendum at the hands of an unholy alliance of the Labour Party right and the bourgeois parties. With Wilson and then Callaghan firmly in the saddle the Labour government and the trade union bureaucrats joined forces to impose their Social Contract which resulted, between 1976 and 1978, in the most rapid decline in living standards this century. The election in 1979 of a particularly 'ideological' right-wing Tory government led by Margaret Thatcher marked the start of a second phase of the austerity

offensive of the capitalist class.

But despite these setbacks and the dramatic increase in unemployment throughout Western Europe in the last few years, the ability of the working class to resist the austerity offensive has not been decisively blunted. Evidence of this is provided by the rumbling political crisis in Belgium, the country with Europe's highest unemployment rate, where the workers continue to fight in defence of the linking of wage rises to inflation, the 'sliding scale of wages', won in the 1961 General Strike. Weaknesses opening the way to potential defeat have most often been seen in response to explicitly political attacks; a case in point is the timidity of the response of the workers' organisations to the recent attempted coup in Spain.

If Thatcher's victory marked the second stage of the bourgeois offensive, then the election of Mitterrand represents the first decisive expression of a second phase of working class response. Having reached an impasse in purely industrial struggle, the workers are increasingly looking to their traditional political parties demanding answers to the deep economic and social problems they face. This development, presaged by the growth of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties since 1975 poses questions revolutionaries have not had to face for decades.

Revolutionaries and the reformist parties

It was during the 1930s, a period of crisis of comparable depth to today, that revolutionary Marxists were last faced with the paradox of important new layers of workers looking to the historically bankrupt reformist parties of the Second and Third Internationals for answers to their pressing problems. Then, as now, historical precedents were not hard to find: the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries had grown dramatically following the February 1917 revolution in Russia as had the German Social Democratic Party after the revolutionary explosion of November 1918. The reformist parties, while unable to meet the needs of the situation or even to grant reforms, became a temporary refuge for the broad masses who were not yet ready to turn to the small and unproven forces of the revolutionary left.

The appropriate tactics for revolutionaries proposed by Trotsky under these circumstances have lost none of their force today. In Germany, the Left Opposition fought for a united front of the workers' parties against the rising threat of Hitler's fascists. With tragic results, this appeal to the Communist Party and the Communist International fell upon deaf ears finally convincing Trotsky of the need for a new Fourth International. The tactic of the united front was again advocated by Trotsky in France between 1934 and 1936. Here he argued that the revolutionaries could only take their place in the united front to 'contribute actively to revolutionary regrouping' and to 'impregnate the united front with a revolutionary content' by 'entering the Socialist Party'; this tactic was necessitated, he wrote, by the weakness of the French Trotskyists of the Communist League which prevented them becoming 'the independent axis around which the proletarian vanguard would crystallize.' (Leon Trotsky, 'The Way Out', *Writings 1934-5*, Pathfinder, 1971, pp 85-6).

Trotsky's advice was based on an assessment that the leaders of the Socialist Party (SFIO) would be unable to control their working class base and that the party would polarise into a revolutionary majority wing and a wing of extreme reaction grouped around the leadership: in effect, the SFIO would undergo a temporary transformation into a centrist party.

Although the smallness of the Trotskyist forces was a painfully similar characteristic, no such centrist transformation was on the cards in the British Labour Party. The reserves of British Imperialism damped the radicalisation of the working

Editorial

class which was evident throughout the rest of Western Europe and avoided any necessity for the ruling class to risk serious sponsorship of fascist or bonapartist tendencies. Britain was out of step and, despite some isolated contrary signs like the dramatic growth of the Labour League of Youth to some 30,000 in the mid-1930s, would remain so for a whole historical period.

Britain joins the mainstream

The post-war period saw something of a synchronisation of developments inside the social democratic parties of Europe, but a negative one as far as revolutionaries were concerned. The protracted boom provided unfavourable conditions for the development of mass left wings inside these parties and taken together with the weakness of the revolutionary Marxists ensured that such left developments as did occur were of a limited character. Substantial splits were rare. By the early 1960s, most West European social democratic parties had shifted decisively to the right dragging the leaders of their left wings in their trail.

Such conditions prevailed in Britain as elsewhere. The long boom meant that economic gains could be achieved through purely industrial struggles in the workplace. The central leader of the Labour Party left, Aneurin Bevan, was not forced to take a central stand in the mass struggle even in such notable class confrontations as the 1954 Docks Strike. The Labour Party did not call even the timid actions it does today to defend workers' living standards and the unions did not provide even token support for actions on political and social questions.

Today, there are signs of a creeping 'Euro-socialism' advancing through Europe: the beginning of an influx into the French SP before Mitterrand's election; a stiffening of the left in the German SPD in response to Schmidt's sharp swing to the right following the rise of Franz Josef Strauss; the beginning of similar developments in Sweden and even Norway with the growth of the Socialist Youth current.

But it is indisputable that the most advanced developments in social democracy today are those that are shaking the Labour Party in Britain. Far from the unitary character of the labour movement acting as a mute on working-class radicalisation it is starting to amplify it. The polarisation in British society is reflected day by day in the changing alliances and recompositions of the Labour Party.

The revolutionary left today is also in a numerically stronger situation than in the 1930s. The correct decision in the late 1960s to orient to the radicalising youth outside the Labour Party has brought into existence comparatively substantial — if still very small — independent organisations.

But the revolutionary Marxists knew, and argued among their new adherents, that they would need to turn again towards the mass workers' parties and confront their leaderships along the road to building mass revolutionary parties. In Britain this task has now become an urgent imperative.

The present imperialist offensive under the twin banners of austerity and remilitarisation poses the need for a united front as urgently today as in the 1930s and in Britain this can only mean joint action between the Labour Party and the unions. But like their French counterparts in the 1930s the British revolutionaries of today can not expect the masses to 'crystallise' around their small organisations. Its increased weight means that the revolutionary left can, however, effect more rapid and dramatic results inside today's united front than it could in the 1930s.

At the same time the political and organisational goals of such work should be clearly defined. As Benn, and Bevan before him, realised the major obstacle to left advance inside the Labour Party is the trade union bureaucracy. Despite the conscious efforts of both to overcome the problem with 'educational' campaigns — Benn's for deputy leader and Bevan's for party treasurer between 1954-56 — neither proposed organising the fight inside the unions.

The building of a new left wing in the unions based on policies of class struggle rather than class collaboration remains the key to both fighting the Tory government and overcoming the road block of the Labourite bureaucracy. Such a base, particularly in the large industrial unions, is the precondition for seizing the openings that exist in fighting for socialist policies.

Full-blooded involvement in campaigns like Benn's for deputy leader and the left's fight to win the Greater London Council or the next general election, should not lead to any tendency to play down differences between the Labour left's espousal of the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' and the policies which will form the basis of a new left wing today.

Not only do the demands of the AES not break with the capitalist system they seek to reform, but the agency which it is proposed to implement them is the capitalist state itself. For this reason it is still necessary to emphasise the fact that Benn's political programme has more in common with that of Denis Healey than that of revolutionary Marxism.

Britain no longer lags behind the rest of Western Europe in the developments in the labour movement. Great opportunities are there for those who will take them. But only if revolutionaries can dedicate the majority of their forces to the fight inside the industrial unions and the Labour Party can they hope to achieve the breakthroughs that are now objectively possible.

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International Features

LABOUR'S IRISH SPRING

BY GEOFF BELL

Ireland has dominated British politics in recent weeks. Geoff Bell looks at the cracks in Labour's bipartisan policy.

In April 1919 J R Clynes, a leading member of the Parliamentary Labour Party, rose in the House of Commons to speak on the question of Ireland, a country then in the midst of a national revolution. He protested at the inaction of the coalition government, at its failure to evolve a political solution capable of restoring some legitimacy to British governance of Ireland. Noting the success of the Sinn Fein party and the eclipse of the constitutional road in Irish nationalism he protested: 'Lawlessness is being encouraged by the government's neglect of this troublesome subject'.

'Troublesome subject' is one of those key phrases which seem appropriate on most occasions when British governments and parliamentary oppositions have tried to wrestle with Ireland's British problem. It suggests exasperation, frustration, annoyance and an overwhelming wish that Ireland could somehow disappear and never again intrude into Britain's domestic policy. It is a phrase for all seasons, particularly the spring of 1981. It especially summarises the feelings of Michael Foot, leader of the British Labour Party and as good a parliamentarian as was J R Clynes, 62 years ago.

Michael Foot, Ireland and parliamentarianism have a recent acquaintance. In July 1977 in his role as Leader of the House of Commons, Foot negotiated a pact with the Official Unionists whereby their MPs agreed to vote with the minority Labour government. In return they received an increase in the number of seats allocated to Northern Ireland at Westminster, the majority of which the Unionists, or other Loyalists, would be likely to win.

At the time of the deal Jock Stallard resigned in protest as a government assistant Whip, but there was no great revolt among Labour's left wing. Such deals were the way things happen at Westminster, and though the Official Unionists were not particularly savoury allies, in the crisis situation the government faced in the summer of 1977, beggars couldn't be choosers.

Even at Westminster there are times when the consequences have to be borne for such squalid manoeuvring. When the Labour government fell in March 1979 it did so because two Irish MPs, Gerry Fitt, then leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, and Frank Maguire, an independent Republican, abstained from the vote of confidence. Fitt's reason was the Labour/Unionist alliance, dead though it then was, Maguire's was the government's policy in the H Blocks in Long Kesh prison.

Although it was an Irish straw which finally broke the Labour government's back, that government's Irish policy hardly figured in most of the post mortems which followed the Wilson/Callaghan years. Two examples, arguably the most important of the left wing critiques, are Coates and Topham's *What Went Wrong* and Tony Benn's *Arguments for Socialism*. The word 'Ireland' appeared in neither even though it was Labour which phased out political status and introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Even when left-winger Arthur Scargill, president of the Yorkshire National Union of Miners, launched a campaign to dump Roy Mason as Barnsley's MP there is no evidence that Mason's Irish despotism was highlighted.

By the start of 1981 a trickle of interest in Ireland had appeared in sections of the Labour left. In the pamphlet *How to Reselect Your MP* Chris Mullin, the deputy editor of *Tribune*, roundly attacked the entire Mason regime, and named two Irish issues on which he advised constituency parties to check the voting record of their MPs — the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Emergency Provisions Act.

By the time this pamphlet was produced Ireland was already hitting the headlines. The first hunger strike at the H Blocks and Armagh had drawn attention, in a way no Labour MP had been prepared to do, to the nature of 'justice' in Northern Ireland: the conveyor belt of repression on which suspects of 'terrorist offences' were arrested under special legislation, questioned under special rules, tried in special courts, but denied special treatment once they had been despatched to prison.

Labour left wakes up to Ireland

Even before the first hunger strike there were indications that the left in the Labour Party considered that Ireland now merited their attention. Peter Hain, a leading member of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee said in the summer of 1980 that he favoured a six month deadline for withdrawal from Ireland. Then, at the October Labour Party conference Tony Benn told a fringe meeting organised by the Labour Committee on Ireland: 'The sooner Britain withdraws from Ireland, the better'.

But none of this hinted at the storm which broke in the aftermath of the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands, the newly elected MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. Michael Foot had steadfastly supported Thatcher's determination to allow Sands to die. His Northern Ireland spokesperson Don Concannon, had even visited Sands a couple of days before his death to inform the hunger striker of Labour's support for Thatcher.

The first to protest was Patrick Duffy, a former navy minister and someone not normally associated with left wing causes. Speaking in the Commons, Duffy attacked what he called the 'me-tooism' between Foot and Thatcher on the hunger strike. Where the normally moderate and tranquil Patrick Duffy led, others followed. Tony Benn, with his campaign for deputy leadership by then well under way, called in late May for the withdrawal of British troops and a policy which promoted the re-unification of Ireland.

The importance of Benn's statements was recognised by his opponents. Michael Foot threatened to sack him from the Shadow Cabinet. Denis Healey, his opponent for deputy leadership, hurled abuse at him for suggesting in a private meeting of the *Tribune* group that Sands should be allowed to take his parliamentary seat. It was now undeniable that Ireland had become a real, live issue in the left/right battle in the Labour Party. So strong was the tide of opinion that Tony Benn predicted at the end of May an imminent change in Labour's policy.

The suddenness with which Ireland became a cause of the Labour left is, at least in part, deceptive. It is reminiscent of what popstar Val Doonican once said when he remarked that it had taken him 15 years to become an overnight success. Similarly, it has taken twelve years of constant campaigning in Britain to make the Irish cause an overnight success with the Labour left.

The Irish solidarity movement in Britain has found difficulty in reaching out to broad forces in the labour movement. But the propaganda produced and the constant lobbying undertaken by some of those in the Troops Out Movement, did prepare the ground for the challenge to Labour's traditional bipartisan approach to Ireland.

The crucial point was not so much Sands' death, but that he

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had been elected to the British House of Commons. This struck at the heart of not just the Labour left's but the whole Labour Party's political and strategic conscience.

Labour's deep parliamentarism

The first election manifesto of the Labour Party — then the Labour Representation Committee — insisted in 1900 that the party was 'fully alive to the fact that the great battles between Capital and Labour are to be fought out on the floor and in the division lobbies of the House of Commons'. Since then the British parliament has been seen by Labour's theologians as not only the means and the end in itself, but as an institution to be revered, and to be humble towards.

Sands' election was not so much an embarrassment to the class conscious Tories, who recognise the House of Commons for the playground it is, but rather for the Labour Party, because of its elevation of the parliamentary method into the realms of religious dogmatism.

The speech of J R Clynes can be quoted again to illustrate this tradition. Referring to the 1918 general election in Ireland which had seen the landslide victory of Sinn Fein over the bourgeois constitutionalists in the Irish Nationalist Party, Clynes complained that the 'inaction of our government' had meant that:

'The party which stood for constitutional action and law and order in the affairs of their country (Ireland) and in the affairs of its government, was nearly destroyed at the polls; and the party which treats this country and this House with contempt and refused to come near it, has received the support of the great majority of the Irish people'.

In the spring of 1981 this history repeated itself. Bobby Sands' election victory was followed in the Belfast council elections by the defeat of the moderate, constitutionalist Gerry Fitt. His conqueror was Fergus O'Hare, a Trotskyist no less, a campaigner for the hunger strikers, and someone who, like Sinn Fein in 1918 'treats this country and this House with contempt'. Accordingly, important people in the Labour Party began to say, something has to be done to halt this dreadful process.

This was not just because Labour politicians perceived a need to come to the aid of their fellow moderates and constitutionalists in Ireland. It was because the whole constitutional methodology, which Labour has worshipped more than any other party in Britain, was being degraded internationally.

Again, there is a marked similarity with the nature of this protest and past attitudes which have been expressed by Labour MPs. During a parliamentary debate on Ireland in 1919 a Labour spokesperson warned:

'It would do well for this House to remember that parliamentary institutions are on trial before the workers of the world. They form a system which is being scrapped in several of the countries of Europe, a system that has not yet justified itself either in relation to the wrongs of Ireland or in relation to the wrongs of Labour. I say it with regret, I am not pleased to say it, I wish it were otherwise, organised workers are being slowly but surely forced to conclude that parliamentary government is a fraud'.

Therefore, it could almost be run on at the end of this quotation, should not Bobby Sands MP be allowed to take his seat, as that nice Mr Benn had so sensibly suggested?

If this appears as a rather harsh and cynical evaluation, it should be remembered that for some years US politicians have argued that Britain should promote a political solution to the Irish conflict. The British media, searching to put the worst possible light on such advice, insisted that this represented no more than a vote-catching operation directed towards the Irish in America.

The truth of the matter is that Edward Kennedy, to take

the most prominent example, will get the Irish votes he needs as long as he remains a Kennedy and a Catholic. What stirred the US politicians into action was similar to that which prodded the leader writers in the *Guardian* and *The Sunday Times* to make similar pleas for a change of course: an appreciation that what was at stake in Northern Ireland was a leading Western nation getting bad press. It further produced a politically unstable situation in Ireland which could lead anywhere, especially with the Provisional IRA starting to talk in the language of Castroite revolutionaries, rather than in the quaint and largely harmless language of conservative green nationalism.

It was not just US politicians and the more sensible newspaper editors who protested. If the leaks are correct then the British Foreign Office had for a number of years been pleading for a search for the solution to the Irish national question. Most dramatically of all, Thatcher herself had made the first tentative steps in this direction with the talks which she and Lord Carrington had with the Irish government of Charles Haughey in December 1980. Carrington's presence suggests that the discussions were not confined to the problem of butter mountains in the EEC or the quality of the tea-pot Haughey presented to Thatcher.

Labour's bipartisan foreign policy

The lateness with which those on the Labour left caught up with these developments and began themselves to think strategically about Ireland is illuminating. Again, there is a familiar pattern. It was, after all, Thatcher and Carrington who had the daring and imagination to settle Zimbabwe, just as it was Harold MacMillan, 20 years ago, who spoke about the need for Britain to float with the 'wind of change' in Africa.

In both instances Labour followed and applauded, but it has seldom initiated such changes in foreign policy. The bipartisanship which so strongly aided British policy in Ireland these last 12 years is just one example of a general bipartisan approach towards foreign and imperial affairs. With only one or two exceptions, Labour has always been happy to endorse a bipartisanship the parameters of which have invariably been drawn by the Tories. It is the Tories who have hoisted the Union Jack, and if expediency demands, rolled it down again. It has been left to Labour to merely salute.



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Such then is the context in which the current debate within the Labour Party on Ireland should be seen. While the cries for a break in bipartisanship may be on the increase, there remains a lack of specificity as to what should take its place.

While Benn recognises that 'partition was a crime against the Irish people' his call for UN troops to replace British ones can only be interpreted as meaning that the UN rather than Britain should police that partition. This may not be what Benn meant, but Irish reality has a way of twisting good liberal intentions into becoming, in the phrase used by the historian Trevelyan in his judgement of Gladstone's Irish policy, 'too little and too late'. The proposal on UN troops is not original. Richard Crossman's diaries record that Crossman and Barbara Castle both toyed with the idea in August 1969 when British troops were sent into Belfast and Derry.

J R Clynes continued to support the type of Home Rule solution proposed by Gladstone after it had been rejected by the majority of the Irish people. Similarly the Labour left still have a lot of running to do to catch up with the mood of a substantial proportion of the all-Irish majority, which is clearly swinging towards a new militancy as a consequence of Thatcher's and Foot's intransigence over the hunger strikes.

Having issued these warnings it is possible to proceed along a more positive path. The difference between the British Foreign Office on the one hand and Thatcher and the Bennite left on the other is that the former think and plot in private while the latter speak in public. The effect of this difference is marked, in the first place, in Ireland itself.

Charlie Haughey attempted to portray the Anglo/Irish talks as being the first, but most important step on the road to Irish unity. This carried with it an implicit warning to all concerned not to upset the apple cart, but to rely on secret diplomacy, constitutionalism and 'good old Charlie'. It was, in effect a call for the demobilisation of the Irish masses, which was essential if the type of new neo-colonial solution he and Thatcher were inching towards was to have any potential.

The opposite was the case when the Labour left began to make Ireland an issue. They did so as a result of Sands' election, the obvious support for the hunger strikers, and the mass movement which grew up on the streets as a manifestation of that support. It was in that respect an encouragement for that mobilisation to continue. For, if Labour was moving as quickly as it appeared to be doing then, perhaps, if the pressure was

maintained, it would move even further: from talking about a vague commitment to Irish unity and British withdrawal to spelling out the ABC of that withdrawal.

When the Labour right accused Benn of making statements that would 'encourage violence' in Ireland they were correct. Although violence for the parliamentary leadership can be defined as any form of mass action which refuses to be bound by the safety valve of British 'peaceful protest'.

Ireland as a key issue in the Labour Party

The Labour leadership's objection to Benn bringing Ireland into the deputy leadership was not because the Labour Party has a principled objection to the concept of Irish unity. Such a policy can in certain circumstances be at one with Labour's parliamentarianism. What worried Foot and Healey was the manner in which Benn made his call for the withdrawal of British troops an issue in the left/right battle in the party; that he did so at a time when Foot was doing his patriotic duty and standing shoulder to shoulder with Thatcher against a hostile world.

Labour's Irish spring has as much to do with the Bennite challenge to the general nature of Labour's consensus politics as it has to do with the fight for a socialist policy towards Ireland. Nevertheless, the Irish door has been opened in the Labour Party, what matters from this point onwards is what will lie behind it.

Certainly the door will not be easily closed again, whatever decision the Labour Party conference comes to on Ireland when it debates it this autumn. The Labour Committee on Ireland's model resolution to the conference calls for a break in bipartisanship, an end to the right of Northern Ireland's Loyalists to veto Irish self-determination, and a policy of committing the next Labour government to withdrawal.

There will be arguments, and rightly so, about the vagueness of this motion, specifically around the lack of precision as to when that withdrawal would take place. Recent opinion polls have shown 33 per cent of Labour voters supporting immediate withdrawal of British troops. However to expect the next Labour Party conference to endorse the call for 'troops out now' would be to overstate the current debate in the Labour Party and the strength of the party's left wing.

Even for the Labour left, never mind the party as a whole, to take up Peter Hain's call for a six months timetable for British withdrawal, a whole new chapter would need to be written on the Labour Party. For that would be, if not a clear break with reformism, then at least a partial fracture. That is not to argue against campaigning for troops out of Ireland now by socialists in the Labour Party. If nothing else, stating this one consistent Marxist position on Ireland, for immediate self-determination, can have the effect of moving at least some in the direction of a more progressive position.

It would however be naive to pretend that Tony Benn is capable of raising the Starry Plough of James Connolly's Citizen Army above the British House of Commons, or for that matter, above the Labour Party's new headquarters in south west London. Sad and disgraceful though it is, the following words of the Irish bourgeois nationalist leader, Charles Parnell, written in 1884, have still to be disproved:

'We are told of some great wave of English democracy which is coming over here to poor Ireland to assist the Irish democracy. The poor Irish democracy will, I fear, have to rely upon themselves in the future as they have done up to the present'.

The historical material quoted in this article is a fraction of that which will be contained in a forthcoming book published by Pluto Press on the Labour Party and the Irish question by this article's author. Full references will be available therein.



Photo: Chris Steele-Perkins, CameraWork

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WAR, SOCIALISM AND NUCLEAR DIS

BY PHIL HEARSE

One of the most important political developments of the last few years is the re-emergence of a mass movement for nuclear disarmament. This new movement has attempted a much more sustained theorisation of world conflict than its previous counterparts. Phil Hearse argues that the campaign for nuclear disarmament is inseparable from the struggle for socialism.

The importance of the discussion on world conflict lies in its implications for practice. If the nuclear disarmament movement was united about practical tasks then the debate about overall problems of world conflict might not be so pressing. But as Raymond Williams acutely observed in *New Left Review* 124 there are at least three different strands within the movement with distinct practical perspectives — the unilateralists, the European Nuclear Disarmament campaign (END), and the World Disarmament Campaign (WDC) which proposes simultaneous *multilateral* disarmament. As Williams explains:

'Arguments drawn from these differences of emphasis become confused, and genuine differences of policy and affiliation are overridden by the too simple conclusion that since all are against the arms race, all know how they will work to end it. This state of mind was memorably and damagingly indicated at the 1980 Labour Party conference, when motions deriving from all three positions were passed, allowing endless opportunities for subsequent confusion and doubletalk.'

Indeed. The doubletalk became all too obvious when Michael Foot, seizing on the fact that the Labour Party conference faced in several directions at once, appointed an avowed *opponent* of unilateral nuclear disarmament, Brynmor John, as his defence spokesperson. If we are not careful the nuclear disarmament movement could become the victim of forces that would debilitate it and turn it away from action for unilateral disarmament into a low-key 'current of opinion' expressing 'concern' about the nuclear threat.

These differences in emphasis in the movement reflect fundamentally different analyses of the world. Remorselessly, the problem of nuclear weapons poses the major questions of world politics — of imperialism, socialism, and above all, the character of the USSR — in our time.

The breakdown of 'detente'

The re-emergence of the nuclear disarmament movement is obviously a response to the breakdown of 'detente' and the new arms race that resulted. 'Detente' never really removed the arms race: the first Strategic Arms Limitation agreement (SALT 1) merely amounted to a certain *rationalisation* and limitation of the arms race, in the mutual interest of both the US ruling class and the Soviet bureaucrats.

It signified that despite the antagonistic social systems in the USA and USSR, it was possible to develop a joint approach to try to contain areas of conflict on a world scale. Neither side wanted unrestrained conflicts or local 'hot' wars which threatened to destabilise the world situation. So why did 'detente' break up?

In our view the end of 'detente' resulted from the changed military, economic and diplomatic fortunes of the USA, particularly at the hands of the developing colonial revolution, and the response of the Carter administration and its strategic plan-



ners. The standing of the US as a world power received some sharp reverses in the 1960s and 1970s. The most obvious was the defeat in Vietnam, which had immense consequences politically, economically and morally.

Despite the gradual withdrawal from Vietnam under Nixon, the final humiliating collapse of the Thieu regime in 1975 was a great blow to American prestige and morale. This combined with the Arab states' use of the oil weapon to hit US interest after the Middle East war with Israel. The Iranian revolution only confirmed the view that the United States was under siege.

But above all it was events in Africa that inflamed the Carter regime and spurred on its most bellicose faction led by security advisor Brzezinski. After the Soviet-backed Cuban intervention to defend the Angolan revolution against South Africa and the CIA, and Soviet and Cuban military aid to shore up Ethiopia's position in the Horn of Africa after 1974, Brzezinski began to speak of 'linkage'. The idea was that a new Soviet military offensive by proxy was taking place in the Third World.

This view became clear in a battle inside the Carter administration in 1977 over the report on Soviet intentions called Presidential Review Memorandum 10 (PRM 10), written by Samuel Huntington. He claimed that studies under the Ford regime suggesting a Soviet push for nuclear superiority were wrong. He further argued that despite any temporary Soviet advantage the US was vastly ahead technologically. As the USSR was diplomatically isolated by the pro-Western turn of China it was therefore in a position of *relative* weakness.

Brzezinski argued that this weakness should be utilised by the United States to go on the offensive against the Soviet Union. The arms race should be stepped up to put pressure on the Soviet economy; diplomatic links with China should be strengthened; and Soviet difficulties in Eastern Europe should be exploited.

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance argued on the contrary that Soviet weakness created the basis for a continuation of 'detente'. He eventually resigned over the Iranian hostages rescue attempt (whose main architect was Brzezinski) after a series of disputes with Brzezinski inside the administration.

The changes in US policy signifying the end of 'detente', including the decisions on the neutron bomb and Cruise missiles, were well under way before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

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ARMAMENT



One small indicator was the hue and cry in 1970 over the 'discovery' by 'liberal' Democrat Frank Church that 3000 Soviet combat troops were stationed in Cuba. The CIA and State Department were not unduly worried as they had known of the brigade stationed in Cuba for 17 years.

But were US suspicions justified? Was the Soviet Union on the offensive, in Africa as elsewhere? The answer cannot be reduced to the Carter regime's post-crisis paranoia. Undoubtedly the US ruling class and the Soviet bureaucracy represent exceedingly reactionary political forces, which both abhor revolutionary change. But because they preside over very different social systems, this mutual distaste for revolutionary changes is not enough to create a long-term community of interests. Both sides may *desire* 'detente' and peaceful co-existence but that can only ever be partial and temporary.

However far the Soviet Union and its leadership may be from our conception of socialism (and the distance is considerable as indicated for example, in the Fourth International's *Theses on Socialist Democracy*) its economy is not a capitalist one and its bureaucracy is not a ruling class. This is a vital distinction from which important consequences follow. For our purposes here it is sufficient to note that while the United States uses its full imperial might to defend its interests world-wide, the Soviet leadership is compelled to manoeuvre diplomatically, economically and occasionally militarily to defend its own interests.

These two ruling groups are invariably drawn in behind *different* sides in world conflict. Vietnam is a classic example. The Soviet leadership wanted an end to the Vietnam conflict and frequently urged compromise on the Vietnamese communists. Above all it didn't want any direct conflict with the US. It therefore grimly gritted its collective teeth while Soviet supply ships were bombed in Haiphong harbour, killing Soviet sailors. But so long as the Vietnamese Communist Party remained intransigent it was politically impossible for the Soviet Union, as leader of the 'socialist' camp, not to give aid to their struggle, even if this was administered through an eyedropper. A complete abandonment of the Vietnamese would have had incalculably negative effects on the communist parties across the world.

Another more recent example where 'detente' broke down is the Middle East. The United States, despite its barely con-

cealed contempt for the Begin regime, relies heavily on the Israeli state as the main bulwark against the Arab revolution. The Soviet bureaucracy, to defend its own strategic interests in the area, has forged an alliance with Arab bourgeois nationalist regimes, above all the Syrians. Neither side has any time for the Palestinian resistance, nor wants revolution. But both are drawn inexorably into conflict with one another, via the medium of their local allies.

The conflict between the Arab regimes and Israel is not the warring of two opposed gangs, but represents the pressure of the Arab and particularly the Palestinian masses on these regimes. *Revolutionary struggle*, and the different attitudes towards it (that the contending 'superpowers' are forced to take, is the main obstacle to 'detente'.

It is the response to this struggle which fuels the US war drive. To defend its interests against the rise of the colonial revolution, whether in the Middle East or in Central America, the US needs much more than nuclear weapons. Its rearmament programme includes the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force — 100,000 soldiers ready to go anywhere that US interests are threatened at a moment's notice — and the stationing of US troops in Egypt. But to prepare for the full use of its strategic and military might, nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union is needed.

One final point on the US militarisation drive is necessary. Along with the rest of the capitalist world the US economy suffered a sharp recession in 1974/75 from which it has not yet fully recovered. Capitalist crisis frequently leads to an upsurge of militarism. It is the combination of this crisis with the perceived threat from the colonial revolution and the Soviet Union which has led to the upsurge of bellicose xenophobia in the US ruling class. And nothing suits the capitalist class more in a period of crisis than a campaign of mystification and hysteria about an external threat — whether it be that of the Islamic Iranians, the communist Cubans or, of course, the Russians.

The layered rhetoric of EP Thompson

Our view of the breakdown of 'detente' has many opponents in the disarmament movement. None are more vehement than the person who had done most to regenerate the anti-nuclear weapons campaign, EP Thompson. His most strident piece, 'The Logic of Exterminism' in *New Left Review* 121, insists that the very existence of humanity is threatened and therefore the kind of analysis which seeks to apportion blame to one side or another is something we can well do without: 'But exterminism itself is not a "class" issue; it is a human issue. Certain kinds of "revolutionary" posturing and rhetoric, which inflame exterminist ideology and carry divisions into the necessary alliances of human resistance, are luxuries we can well do without.'

But beneath the layer upon layer of Thompson's doom-laden rhetoric there is after all an analysis of the world, and of the kind of campaign we need. This analysis should itself be subject to criticism despite Thompson's attempt to pre-empt it through heavy-handed sarcasm about 'revolutionary know-alls'. Thompson claimed in *The Guardian* for example that such know-alls 'know... among other things that El Salvador is more important than Afghanistan, and that Russian missiles are mainly defensive'. We plead guilty to both.

Thompson's essential position is this. The arms race is 'a self-generating independent variable'. Weapons systems are not politically neutral, but have far-reaching political effects on the societies which produce them. To analyse the Soviet Union and the United States in terms of their 'modes of production' is to miss the point, as their military bureaucracies play a determining role. The nuclear weapons race is shaping the very societies which gave rise to it. He explains:

'It may comfort socialists to see a 'cause' for this (the arms

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race) primarily in western imperialism, and only secondarily in Soviet reaction. This is now beside the point. To argue from origins, to nominate goodies or baddies, is to take refuge from reality in moralism (sic)... Superpowers which have been locked for thirty years in the postures of military confrontation increasingly adopt militaristic characteristics in their economies, their policy and their culture. What may have originated in reaction becomes direction. What is justified as rational self-interest by one power or another becomes, in the collision of the two, irrational. We are confronting an accumulating logic of process.'

The conclusion is that we are dealing not with 'Imperialism: the highest stage of capitalism', but 'Exterminism: the final stage of civilisation'. As Thompson says:

'There is an internal dynamic and reciprocal logic here which requires a new category for its analysis. If 'the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam mill, society with the industrial capitalist', what are we given by those Satanic mills now at work, grinding out the means of human extermination? I have reached this point of thought once before, and turned my head away in despair. Now, when I look at it directly, I know that the category which we need is that of exterminism.'

Despite his admirably activist conclusions, Thompson's analysis is in fact one of despair. Whatever alliances of 'human resistance' we need to create, Thompson's vision is that of a world gone mad, a world in which the two most powerful nations have been literally taken over by their military machines. One can't help thinking that there will be many more sympathetic to Thompson than to us 'revolutionary know-alls', who detect a slight over-statement in this thesis.

Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union are societies which are in the most literal sense *irrational*. The state machine in both, including the military machine, defends a *given* order, particular class or bureaucratic interests. Neither are they societies whose central objective is to reproduce their military machine. An abundance of human purposes are served by both, not least the production and reproduction of surplus value in the United States, and the defence of a bureaucratically planned economy in the other.

This brings us to a central point of dispute with Thompson. 'Weapons', he says, 'are political agents also'. No: weapons are subordinate to the aims and interests of those who wield them — it is precisely that which prevents us from despairing, and gives us the certain knowledge that there exist the social and class forces which can prevent them from being used.

USA = USSR?

Despite denials to the contrary, the view that both sides are 'equally responsible' for the arms race, is extremely common in the disarmament movement. In particular the view that even if both sides are not equally responsible, both share *some* responsibility, informs many of the leaders of the European Nuclear Disarmament campaign (END). Indeed, their founding statement says: 'We do not wish to apportion guilt between the political and military leaders of East and West. Guilt lies squarely on both parties. Both parties have adopted menacing postures and committed aggressive actions in different parts of the world'. This position is echoed by the slogan on the masthead of *Socialist Worker*: 'Neither Washington nor Moscow'.

But contrary to Thompson's protestations the dynamics of the conflict between USA and the USSR can only be grasped *historically*. There is indeed an irony that this should be denied by so eminent a socialist historian. The USA emerged from the second world war as overwhelmingly the world's leading economic and military power. The economy of the Soviet Union was in ruins. But from the dropping of the first atomic

bomb in 1945, to the decision to go ahead with the production of the hydrogen bomb in 1950, the *United States* progressively adopted a more hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union. At each stage since then the new twists in the arms race have each been given by the United States — the first intercontinental ballistic missile, the first nuclear submarine, the first anti-missile missile — at each stage of the technological race the United States has striven to establish its nuclear superiority.

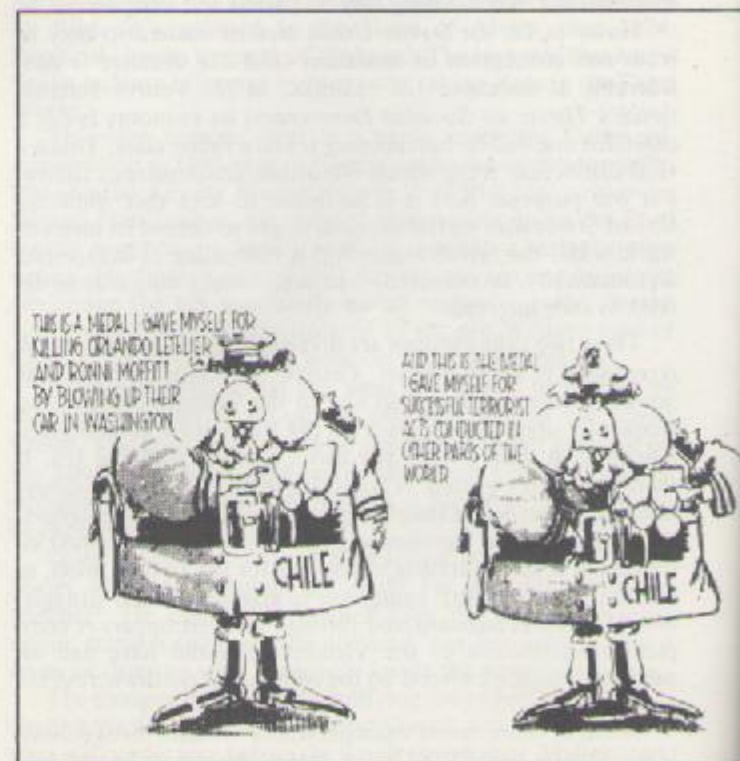
There are therefore only two arguments against 'apportioning blame' for the arms race: that the Soviet Union was wrong in the first place to defend itself with nuclear weapons, or that the Soviet Union had 'aggressive intentions' against the west.

The first is a utopian argument. It's no secret that the decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was at least in part motivated by the intention of demonstrating to the Soviet Union the superiority of the United States. In order to defend itself against the capitalist west, and to prevent unlimited blackmail from occurring, it was necessary for the Soviet Union to develop its own nuclear weapons.

It would be naive in the extreme to believe that the US and other western powers would not have used a nuclear monopoly to impose their own will, including trying to roll back the borders of the Soviet Union. And it would be even more naive to believe that the Soviet Union could have dealt with such a threat simply by appeals to the workers of the world to defend them. Potentially, at least, the continued existence of the Soviet Union was at stake.

Once the nuclear defence of the Soviet Union was embarked upon, there was an in-built logic to maintain the credibility and effectiveness of the Soviet nuclear force, in the context of unremitting US attempts both to encircle the Soviet Union with its military might (hence NATO, CENTO and SEATO) and also to use its military forces against revolutionary developments throughout the world.

Soviet nuclear weapons have constrained what US imperialism has been able to achieve militarily, not just against the Soviet Union itself, but against developing revolutions as well. Without Soviet nuclear weapons, there would have been at least the temptation to use, or to threaten to use nuclear weapons in Korea and Vietnam and possibly in Cuba as well.



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In *Marxism Today*, March 1981, Dan Smith, a leading member of END polemicalised with this approach: 'The Soviet response has been a response *in kind*. One must first ask if that is good enough... and one must then ask whether it need have gone so far... Both sides are equipped with nuclear overkill.' He contests the view that the Soviet Union is somehow more progressive than the United States since there is 'no evidence that the USSR is attempting, or has thought of attempting, to overthrow the majority of the world's nastiest regimes.' He further disagrees with the view that the Soviet Union has been less militaristic than the USA on the grounds that Afghanistan may signal a change in this, and that 'military strength has been the basis of the USSR's hold on Eastern Europe.'

Has the Soviet response been good enough? Clearly not. Since the Soviet leaders adopted the formula of 'socialism in one country' they long ago abandoned the idea of international proletarian revolution to rid the world of oppression. Instead they have sought peaceful coexistence with imperialism at a diplomatic and political level, whilst militarily attempting to match the USA missile for missile, nuclear overkill for nuclear overkill. A socialist defense policy would place centrally the international mobilisation of the working class and the oppressed against imperialist militarism — a policy which is diametrically opposed to the peaceful coexistence strategy of the Soviet bureaucrats.

The USSR's *exclusive* reliance on military and nuclear technology for defence has its flipside in the extinction of socialist democracy throughout eastern Europe enforced by Soviet military might. Any socialist perspective and defence of the Soviet Union would have to include the overthrow of the Soviet bureaucracy and the institution of socialist democracy throughout eastern Europe. But all Dan Smith's arguments skirt round the central questions: does the Soviet Union have the right to defend itself seriously, including with nuclear weapons, notwithstanding our profound differences with their strategy? Is there anything at all worth defending about the Soviet Union?

David Fernbach in 'The impasse facing CND', *Politics and Power No3*, is much more direct. Seizing on the ambiguity of the END and CND leaders on the responsibility of the arms

race he asserts that essentially the USSR is the *greater evil*:

'In Europe there is no symmetry between East and West. Here, as far as the writ of the Kremlin holds sway there is brutal repression of all progressive movements, and any pretence of democracy is a fraud. In Western Europe, for all the undoubted evils of our society, the existence of democratic institutions both sets definite limits to injustice, and provides the means for steadily working to erode it. Wherever people have the chance to choose which of the two systems to live under, they vote massively with their feet.'

The logic of such a position is implacable: 'Western Europe very definitely does have something to defend, as much as the citizens of any democratic state might need to defend themselves against the threat of dictatorship generated within their own society.'

Imperialism and war

These questions about the Soviet Union, as well as the proposal of Mary Kaldor of CND that Britain should unilaterally disarm but not the United States, can only be answered by an analysis of the basic cause of wars in our epoch. Once again we have to defy Thompson and seek an historical explanation.

Lenin in 1913 defined the new period of world capitalism, imperialism, as the epoch of 'wars and revolution'. The next six years provided a rather stunning vindication of his assertion — not just the first world war, but the revolutions in Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary. War has been a constant feature of the world situation since then. Few people on the left would demur from the view that the first world war was an *inter-imperialist* war, in the first instance a war between German and British imperialism.

The second world war, involving the conflict between the Soviet Union and Germany, and the resistance struggle of nationally oppressed countries against Nazi occupation wasn't *simply* an inter-imperialist war, but in its origins, without doubt, its motor force was the attempt by German imperialism, under Nazi leadership, to overcome the crippling effects of the settlement imposed by French, American and British imperialism after the first world war. Overlaid with this conflict was a specific competition between American and Japanese imperialism for control of the Pacific, and an attempt by Italian imperialism to grab a piece of the action on the coat tails of Germany.

Unless the causes of the second world war are situated in this fashion, one is reduced to discussing human irrationality or 'accident'. Competition between rival imperialisms, or competition by rival nation states (themselves the product of the emergence of capitalism) — this is the source of war in our period.

The connection between imperialism and war was never in doubt for socialists like Rosa Luxemburg, who produced some of the classic writings of socialist anti-militarism at the beginning of the century. They understood the fundamental point that the logic of competition is worldwide expansion. They also understood that there was a built-in logic for rival imperialisms to clash militarily because of this struggle to dominate markets and sources of raw materials. For the Marxists of the early twentieth century, like Lenin and Luxemburg, the abolition of war was interconnected with the abolition of capitalism.

That incidentally was why they never mixed up *anti-militarism* with *pacifism* and never abhorred all use of arms; they recognised that a certain use of arms — revolution — was the means to abolish capitalism, and hence war. They always viewed pacifism as essentially a utopian response.

But, of course, things have changed. First a number of states, including powerful ones, have come into existence which have a very different kind of economy. Whatever one's view of the Soviet Union it is difficult to assert that there is any fun-

THIS MONSTER HOLDS THE \$5 I USE TO SHOOT AMERICANS IN MY OWN COUNTRY WHO DISAGREE WITH ME AND THIS LEATHER BRET AND ELEGANT HAND-STITCHED UNIFORM WERE MADE FOR ME BY THE STUPID PEASANTS.



AND SEE THESE? THESE ARE THE BOOBS KISSED BY ALEXANDER HAIK AND RONALD REAGAN.



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GARY

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damentally expansionary dynamic in its *economy*. Second, nuclear weapons have come into existence. Both these factors militate against future inter-imperialist wars.

It is hard to imagine, for example, trade conflicts between Japan and the United States being resolved in future by a nuclear war, because even the most foolish capitalist today understands that the destruction of all significant capital doesn't create the basis for gaining a decisive advantage over one's rivals. Moreover, the existence of non-capitalist states creates a necessary and inevitable solidarity between the imperialist powers against them. True, capital remains nationally based and inter-imperialist conflict and competition continues unabated. But all the imperialist powers recognise their common interest against a collectivist social system which threatens the basis of their existence.

But if inter-imperialist war is less likely in the epoch of nuclear weapons, then the armed might of the imperialist powers, its use and threatened use, remains an indispensable component of the maintenance of the *imperialist world system*, a category which seems to have escaped many writers on this question. Fernbach's judgement about east and west Europe omits any global assessment of the role of western imperialism and the USSR. 'Democratic' Europe is a component part of an inter-locking system of world wide oppression and exploitation.

The use, or threatened use, of armed force is an absolutely integral mechanism for maintaining the rule and domination of capital world-wide. It is the militarism of imperialism that gave rise to nuclear weapons. While its more immediate targets may be those fighting to end its grip over the colonial world, in the longer term the imperialist war machine is aimed at overturning the socialised economies of all the post-capitalist states, particularly the Soviet Union. Socialists should therefore both defend the right of the Soviet Union to possess nuclear weapons and call for the unilateral nuclear disarmament of all the imperialist countries.

Disarmament and socialism

With the world divided into antagonistic social systems it is clearly impossible to envisage the total abolition of nuclear weapons without the abolition of capitalism. Whatever partial and temporary limitations are put by treaty on the production of nuclear weapons, the ruling classes of the capitalist countries will never agree to abandon their most destructive and decisive weapon.

But there is no reason for inactivity or sectarianism towards the anti-nuclear campaigns. A mass anti-war, anti-nuclear weapons movement can put definite limits on the production, development and use of these weapons, and in this struggle can lead thousands of people to see the logic of fighting the nuclear arsenal — fighting the system that gave rise to it. It is not even excluded that one or two of the secondary imperialist powers can actually be forced, under left governments, to give up nuclear weapons. But the United States will never abandon its nuclear arsenal until the workers seize it.

This understanding of the possibilities and limits inherent in disarmament movements should inform our assessment of the different disarmament movements. The World Disarmament Campaign is without doubt the weakest and most utopian. Its leaders imagine that it is possible to abolish all weapons via negotiation. This is tantamount to believing that it is possible by discussion to abolish all class, national and other fundamental antagonisms in the world. The World Disarmament Campaign follows up the logic of its utopian position by putting the stress on influencing world 'leaders' and opposes mass action, an orientation to the labour movement — and indeed unilateralism. Its influence in the disarmament movement is debilitating and diversionary.

The European Nuclear Disarmament Campaign (END) is not really a nationally organised campaign. Its objective, however, is not a reactionary one and certainly doesn't imply the Wonderland utopianism of the WDC. The demand of a nuclear-free Europe, as END put it 'from Poland to Portugal', is opposed by all those who benefit from the militarisation of Europe, — the NATO powers and above all the United States. Certainly, the US has stationed a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons in Europe to counter the possibility of a *conventional* attack from the Warsaw Pact.

While the END demand for a nuclear-free Europe should not be a barrier to participating in actions called by the campaign it would be logical to put the onus for the militarisation of Europe where it belongs — on NATO, and in particular, the United States. The intent behind the slogan of a nuclear-free Europe should be pursued through a campaign against NATO, and in western countries, for the withdrawal of these countries from NATO.

By far the largest and most influential disarmament movement is CND, which is committed to unilateral disarmament. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail the strategy of CND, but some general points are clear. CND today is bigger and more influential than it ever was in the late fifties or early sixties. It is far from having fulfilled its potential. If it chooses, it can mobilise hundreds of thousands on the streets, and its message can be taken up in workplaces and unions up and down the country; the weightiest sections of society can be won to fight actively for its demands. The question is: does CND really want to succeed?

To fight for CND's demands — no Cruise, no Trident, cut arms spending, for unilateral disarmament — means to fight against the interests of US and British imperialism. If there is confusion that to achieve the final goal of abolition of nuclear weapons means to struggle for world socialism, then there will be unclarity on the *agency* for achieving unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The British Communist Party sees a broad democratic alliance of classes as the key strategy. For us it is the working class in this country and internationally through its mass organisations which is the vital component for any campaign for unilateral disarmament. Not only does it alone have the strength to win such a campaign, but it is also the class whose interests will be best served by disarming imperialism. A clear-sighted view of who bears the responsibility for missile madness, and of the relationship between socialism and disarmament can only aid the building of CND and the struggle for socialism.

State Research Bulletins

State Research is a bi-monthly bulletin on policing and security.

Bulletin 24 June/July contains articles on Brixton, the coup plots of '68, '69 and '79, civil defence in Northern Ireland and many other news stories. Each bulletin has a longer background paper which examines issues in detail: in 24 the paper argues that there is no constitutional basis for the maintenance of a standing army. This means that the British Army has been an 'unlawful' body since 1955 when parliament stopped legalising its existence by passing annual Acts. This is far from being an academic question as the increasing use of the army in strikes and public order situation has shown.

Subscriptions: £5 pa from 9, Poland St, London W1.
Cheques payable to: Independent Research Publications Ltd.

ARGUMENTS FOR CAPITALISM

Arguments for Capitalism

Shirley Williams: *Politics is for People*, Penguin, 1981, £2.50.

Many reviewers have commented upon the lack of originality and the banality which characterise Shirley Williams' book. Barbara Wootton, writing in *New Society*, wrote that Shirley's outpourings had almost driven her to espouse Marxism. Wootton and Bernard Crick who reviewed the book in *The Guardian* are by no stretch of the imagination foot-soldiers of Benn's 'New Model Army'; their remarks will hurt the leaders of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) far more than any review in a journal of the far left. The question is: are Crick and Wootton correct to dismiss Ms Williams in so summary a fashion? Yes and no.

On the level of ideas, the book is a melange of timeless reformist aspirations and bankrupt political ideology. The tension is well-expressed in comparing Ms Williams' two heroes: the dead theorist Tawney and the living pragmatist Dahrendorf. The result is gibberish: some of it well-meant, some of it sinister.

It is on the level of practice that the SDP enterprise is more original. Previous Labour revisionism has taken one of two forms. Ramsay Macdonald led a large section of the Parliamentary Labour Party into alliance with the Tories leaving the party crippled for years while its erstwhile leaders argued explicitly for the maintenance of capitalism despite the large-scale poverty, mass unemployment and naked exploitation which characterised Britain in the 1930s.

In the 1950s, a theoretical revision was attempted by Strachey, Crosland and Gaitskell which culminated in the unsuccessful attempt to remove Clause Four from the Labour Party constitution. Hypnotised by the economic boom, Crosland and his comrades argued that capitalism had solved most of its problems: unemployment was a nightmare of the past; classes, in the classical sense, no longer existed; and 'mankind was poised on the threshold of abundance'. In such a situation there was clearly neither room nor necessity for socialism.

The originality of Jenkins, Williams and their friends lies in their attempt to combine these two approaches. They do not wish to go over to Thatcher as that would be the shortest step to political extinction. Since Thatcher is neither a Disraeli nor a Baldwin, the next best thing is to create a political party in which the ghosts of the two Tory patriarchs can mingle with their present-day admirers. The aim of the SDP is not simply to split the Labour Party but the Tories as well. It is on the latter point that the owners of capital are seriously divided: the almost unanimous support for the SDP in the media should not lead us to assume that the City of London wants a split in the Conservative Party.

When I started reading Ms Williams' book I hoped that there would be at least the flickerings of one or two new ideas with which to engage. I was disappointed. There are few paragraphs in the entire book that could not have been penned by Edward Heath. The book is a hymn of praise to the consensus which has dominated postwar politics in Bri-

BY TARIQ ALI

tain.

Thatcher, at least, understands that consensus politics cannot work in conditions of mass unemployment and social crisis. The 'Limehouse Declaration seeks to institutionalise the *status quo* with these profound words: 'to maintain a healthy public sector without frequent frontier changes.' Ms Williams' book is a 'sincere', 'nice', 'honest', 'well-meaning', attempt to defend this indefensible proposition while maintaining the ambiguities which dominated the launching of the SDP. On external politics Ms Williams and friends are merely the human face of Thatcherism. They are committed to strengthening capitalism in Europe; they are in favour of Britain maintaining nuclear weapons and playing a leading role in NATO and they argue passionately for giving more money to the Third World — in order to prevent social revolutions.

We can well ask 'so what's new?' Was it necessary to leave the Labour Party to argue for such policies? Are not Denis Healey, Roy Hattersley and their supporters putting forward similar arguments? True they have to pay a price. Healey has to be seen on platforms at mass demonstrations against unemployment; Hattersley has to wear a cloth cap and join the People's March when it passes through Birmingham; John Silkin has to pretend that he is on the left. But these are trifles and can surely be forgotten when Labour is back in office. Shirley Williams, Roy Jenkins and David Owen have no fundamental differences with the Labour right wing currently organised in the Labour Solidarity Campaign except on two questions: trade unions and the EEC.

'The unions are too powerful!' scream the Tories and the Liberals. 'We agree', reply Ms Williams and co. It is the fear of an organised working class which drives the right wing away from the Labour Party. The fear is understandable. What is involved here is not the subjective desires or intentions of extreme right-wing trade union leader A or left-wing trade union leader B, but the objective position of the trade unions in contemporary British society. They represent the single most important democratic gain of the working class.

Shirley Williams' 'public interest' is an utterly bogus concept. Bourgeois commentators more astute than she have no problems in admitting that it is the interests of private capital which determine the policies of successive governments. And the organisational strength of the unions is an obstacle to Capital.

The great fear which the SDP current reflects is that a new Labour government would be under very heavy pressure to institute a number of socialist measures. The Alternative Economic Strategy is not a strategy for socialism (it is many years behind the official platform of Allende's Socialist Party), but it would undoubtedly create a further polarisation between Labour and Capital if implemented.

Ms Williams' latest supporter, Sue Slipman, is not as foolish as is commonly alleged

because she has joined the SDP. Right-wing 'Eurocommunism' and the SDP share a dread of the 'ultra-left' in the Labour Party. Slipman and her friends fear a military coup in the event of a Labour government trying to implement any radical measures. In such an eventuality, they inquire (naive souls that they are), would it not be a better to preserve bourgeois democracy? The SDP is their 'historic compromise' with the most radical defenders of the English bourgeoisie.

In her ostrich-like desperation to avoid the conflict between opposed social forces, Shirley Williams prefers to ignore the polarisation which is taking place in Britain today. To ascribe Benn's popularity to the fact that he is a 'gifted liar' or a 'demagogue' or whatever insults are bandied about in the salons of the rich may satisfy the complacent. The facts are somewhat different. In a political situation where the interests of the ruling class are defended with manic zeal by a leader such as Margaret Thatcher, the only figure in the Labour Party who appears dynamic and capable of resisting the Tory onslaught is Tony Benn. That is why his support transcends the narrow confines of the constituency Labour parties (important though these are) and extends into the factories and the ranks of the unemployed. Benn's programme has its limitations, but the combination of radical democracy and social reformism is stronger than anything Ms Williams has to offer.

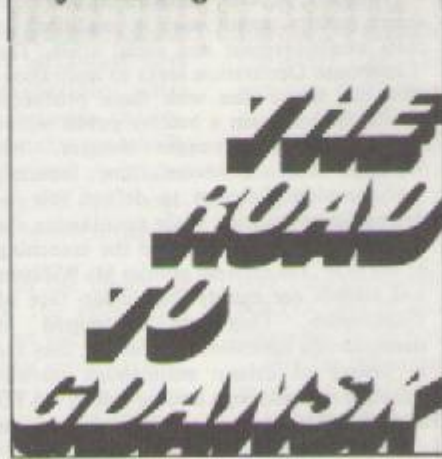
Politics Is For People is an unfortunate title as the whole volume, despite its pseudo-democratic rhetoric and its talk of decentralisation, is littered with the most gross defence of elitism. With the help of Immanuel Kant, we are told: 'Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing can ever be made.' Those who think otherwise, like Trotskyists, are incurable romantics, nay, latter-day Utopians. Why? Because they believe that perfect revolutions are possible with 'imperfect' human beings. The logic is obvious: if human beings are 'imperfect' then a tiny band of 'perfect' people will put things right. The old Fabian concepts come out with a vengeance. Why then, may we ask, did such an honest person choose such a dishonest title? Two alternatives come to mind: *Politics Is For Us* or the slightly more provocative *No Clare: For The Yobboes*.

One of the few arguments advanced in the book against revolutionary Marxists is that they are against pluralism in the economy and therefore, despite what they say, they must be against pluralism in the political sphere. The notion is false on every count. The capitalist economy is not 'pluralistic' in the real sense of the word. The state capitalist sectors of all capitalist economies are subordinated to the needs of private capital on the domestic and international level. The working class, the largest social class in the country, under normal circumstances has no control of any sec-

THE ROAD TO GDANSK

BY DAVY JONES

By Daniel Singer



Daniel Singer: *The Road to Gdansk*, Monthly Review Press, £8.

The massive revolt of the Polish workers is the best advertisement for socialism in years. At last workers throughout the world can glimpse an alternative to capitalism and Stalinist totalitarianism. Daniel Singer's message in *The Road to Gdansk* is one of hope: the confident belief that more than 25 years after Stalin's death the monolith that he created may soon be cracked by the workers of eastern Europe.

Singer's book was almost finished before the Polish strike wave last August dramatically confirmed his thesis. He begins with a study of arguably the most famous writer in the world, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and the impact of his work. He polemicalises with those who dismiss Solzhenitsyn because of his indisputably reactionary outlook.

Singer argues that the only way to confront Solzhenitsyn's message that revolution leads to the concentration camp is to understand why it is so devastatingly subversive

within the Soviet Union. The reason is that within his writing there are passages of unpalatable truth about the horrors perpetrated in the name of socialism which threaten the whole Stalinist edifice.

In his essay on the Soviet Union Singer outlines the limitations of the changes introduced by Khrushchev after Stalin's death, and the contrasting 'grey days of Brezhnevism'. Beneath the surface however contradictions are slowly working themselves out. Russia is increasingly a country of town-dwellers — the rural population has declined from 57 per cent of the population in 1953 to 38 per cent in 1979. Meanwhile the working class has grown from 30 to 78 million.

But after the repeated failure of the economic plans and the steady decline in labour productivity — 8.4 per cent in the 1950s down to 3.4 per cent in the late 1970s — Russia is now heading towards zero growth. Such a perspective threatens to undermine the economic basis for the political quiescence of the Russian workers.

Singer is critical of the opposition movements in eastern Europe for their failure to develop a rounded project linked to the concrete needs of the working class. Bahro's vision in *The Alternative* is deficient not in its analysis of the defects of eastern Europe but his proposed agents of change. Singer argues that the decisive role lies not with the intellectuals but with the working class, and he turns his attention to the Polish workers' revolt of 1970 as the harbinger of future progress.

While the riots were bloodily repressed the awesome power of the Polish workers ousted Gomulka and forced on the new Gierek regime a big rise in the workers' living standards in the early 1970s. When Gierek clumsily tried to raise prices himself in 1976 he received a speedy and ominous rebuff from the confident Polish workers. And in the same year the intellectual dissidents reorganised to form KOR laying the basis for the worker/intellectual alliance that was to prove insurmountable to Gierek last summer.

Singer can be excused for understating the enormous significance of last August's Gdansk agreements in his hastily-written postscript. Only now can their full meaning be grasped. For the first time in eastern Europe the vast majority of the adult population — 10 million workers, 2 million small farmers, as well as students and intellectuals — are organised independently from the iron grip of the party/state bureaucracy. Mere disturbing still for the Stalinist rulers of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, powerful democratising currents have emerged within the Communist Party itself, one third of whose members are active within 'Solidarity'. After Gomulka and Gierek's broken promises they are determined to introduce structural reforms to make the party leaders accountable.

But the last year was the easy part. Solidarity's mass movement will increasingly have to tackle the thorniest problem of all: can the present system and ruling party be reformed or must they be replaced by a new higher form of socialist democracy. Resolving this question will require all the courage, ingenuity and class consciousness that the Polish workers already vividly displayed.

tor.

Secondly it is simply not the case that a 'mixed economy' is a guarantor of democratic rights. The German state from 1933-44 was a 'mixed economy' *par excellence*. A proto-Keynesian state sector co-existed happily with a private sector which doubled and quadrupled its profits as the Nazi regime ensured that the only pluralism that existed was confined to the concentration camps.

Thirdly, we would insist that only socialist revolutions will permit the establishment of far-reaching forms of direct democracy on a scale never before seen on this continent. Such a revolution will only be possible if the vast majority of workers take their destiny in their own hands. Marx and Engels declared in the *Communist Manifesto* that the emancipation of the working class can only be accomplished by the working class itself. Lenin developed this thought further and, after much empirical study, insisted that the workers would need a political party to help win the final victories against a ruling class which was well-organised politically and militarily.

Shirley Williams attempts to reconstruct the ideas of a dilapidated Fabian theocracy in order to tell us that 'human nature' rules and an 'enlightened' elite is crucial. Unable to win many in her former party to these ideas she now casts her net even further. The game is by no means over. There will be many more surprises in store for everyone before the decade is over, but the diluted rhetoric of *Politics Is For People* is of little use for the ruling class. It needs something more vigorous. We would venture to predict that many in the SDP will denounce this book as being too contaminated with 'left' ideas in the years that follow.

Other THE BOOKSHOP

328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP

Large selection of Marxist and left books, feminist literature, pamphlets, postcards, badges, etc.

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe — Britain's most authoritative journal on Eastern Europe and *Intercontinental Press* for regular coverage of world events, both available from The Other Bookshop.

THE VICTORY OF HOPE

BY MARIE-JO SERRIE

R W Johnson: *The Long March of the French Left*, Macmillan Press, 1981, £8.95.

R W Johnson's conclusion in *The Long March of the French Left* is that 'if the Left could not keep hope alive its long march might well become a march without an end'. His assessment is correct but has been overtaken by history. The wave of enthusiasm which broke all over France on the announcement of Socialist Party (PS) leader François Mitterand's win in the presidential elections this year is a clear mark of what Mitterand himself in his inaugural speech at the Elysée called 'the victory of hope'.

Johnson's book is extremely interesting and well-informed, if expensive. The task he sets himself is ambitious but necessary if one is to understand the present political situation in France: to analyse the reasons for the break-up of the Union of the Left and to assess the prospects of its future re-emergence. The first section reads as a brilliant essay presenting the reader with a few well-chosen and well-portrayed 'scenes of France' from the sweeping victory of the left in the 1977 municipal elections to the bitter image of the riot police savagely attacking striking steelworkers with the Communist Party (PCF) unable to do anything but restrain the victims. For the author, this is symbolic of the failure of the Union of the Left.

Johnson presents us with a detailed political history of France since the last time the left was in office: the 'tripartite' government of 1944-7, in which the SFIO (the forerunner of the PS) participated together with the PCF and the bourgeois MRP, to which de Gaulle belonged at the time. His insightful journey through the past highlights the chequered history of the workers' parties, their internal struggles and the consequences for their political lines, the well-orchestrated campaign to expel the PCF from government, and the evolution of the major unions in the post-war period. He also provides a clear insight into de Gaulle's role in the creation of 'Gaullism' and the way in which the left was excluded from power in the Fifth Republic.

It is fascinating to trace through Johnson's account, the careers of all the 'new' names in Mitterand's cabinet: the role of Mauroy, today the Prime Minister, in the evolution of the present balance of political positions within the PS; the ministry of Defferre, multi-millionaire mayor of Marseilles and a renowned right-winger within the party, in the Fourth Republic government of Guy Mollet; the defection of Rocard from the leftist PSU to join the PS at the 'Assises du Socialisme' striking a deal with Mitterand which allowed Mitterand to expel the left-wing CERES group from the leadership of the party at the Pau Congress in January 1975.

Today, CERES leader Chevènement is Minister of Technology and Research while Rocard, his right-wing rival, is Minister of State Planning. Savary, also a great opponent of the PCF, and at one time eliminated from the leadership by Mitterand, is now Minister of Education while Michel Crepeau, whose victory in the leadership elections of the Left



Radicals (MRG) is analysed by Johnson, is Minister of the Environment...

Despite his efforts to present himself as an objective purveyor of fact, Johnson's account reveals his own biases. He is dismissive in his presentation of the far left's view that the PCF bears a grave responsibility for failing to oppose the disarming of the 'maquisards' in 1945 and for not taking power in 1968 when the opportunity was there. Johnson argues that the PCF was being realistic while the 'gauchistes' were either badly informed or irresponsible, a charge familiar to all revolutionaries; indeed, even his use of the term 'gauchistes', which is the reformist left's derogatory label for the revolutionaries (the English equivalent would be 'the ultra-left'), places him firmly, if not uncritically, in the reformist camp.

As for the further charge against the PCF that it broke unity in 1978, here Johnson admits that it is quite true but denies that the reason lay in the party's unwillingness or inability to take office; rather it was a tactical matter of internal quarrels within the Politbureau (Marchais having to prove to Leroy that he was not a soft opponent to Mitterand) and alarm at the growing influence enjoyed by the PS.

One of the great strengths of Johnson's book is the section in which he presents a serious sociological account of voting patterns over the last five years and shows how the building of the new PS out of the ruins of the SFIO, and the emergence of Mitterand's own brand of leadership, has had important electoral consequences for the PCF even though it has not effectively threatened the latter's organisational hold on the working class or its industrial implantation.

Johnson's broad conclusion is that only left unity can consolidate the gains of the last decade; but the unity he advocates is not the unity in struggle fought for by revolutionaries but a narrower electoral and policy unity. The book was completed before the May presidential elections and some of the pessimism of its conclusion has been overtaken by events. Despite the PCF's crackdown on opposition in its own ranks after 1978 and the clashing

ambitions and trajectories of the various currents inside the PS — both of which are critically and acutely reviewed by the author — the elections have ended with a Socialist in the Elysée, as Communist voters followed the direction to vote Mitterand in the second round that their leaders had given so reluctantly.

But the fact that France has voted 'left' despite the absence of a common campaign does not disprove Johnson's central thesis; it merely demonstrates the depth of the workers' desire to be rid of Giscard. The fate of the left depends crucially on whether unity can be achieved and on what terms.

But even if the PCF, shaken by Marchais' poor showing in May, accepts Mitterand's tough terms for a common campaign in the legislative elections scheduled for June; even if, as is highly likely to the horror of the right, France's next government includes PCF ministers, the question remains: will Mitterand's government follow the road of the 1944 coalition and of all the other social democratic governments in Europe today — the road of austerity against the working class? This last question will be answered by the strength of another kind of unity: the unity in struggle of the working class for which the French Trotskyists, whose history and ideas are so absent from Johnson's book, have been campaigning throughout the last five years.

Pluto Press

Anne Bottomley, Katherine Gieve,
Gay Moon, Angela Weir
**The Cohabitation
Handbook**
A Women's Guide to the Law

A practical guide to the law for women who are living with someone without being married. It deals with the rights of cohabitants to their shared home and to protection from violence in it. It shows how cohabitation affects income tax, access to state benefits, maintenance, insurance, joint accounts. It describes the rights of unmarried parents in relation to their children, their obligations of support and rights to benefit. It describes what happens on the death of a cohabitant.

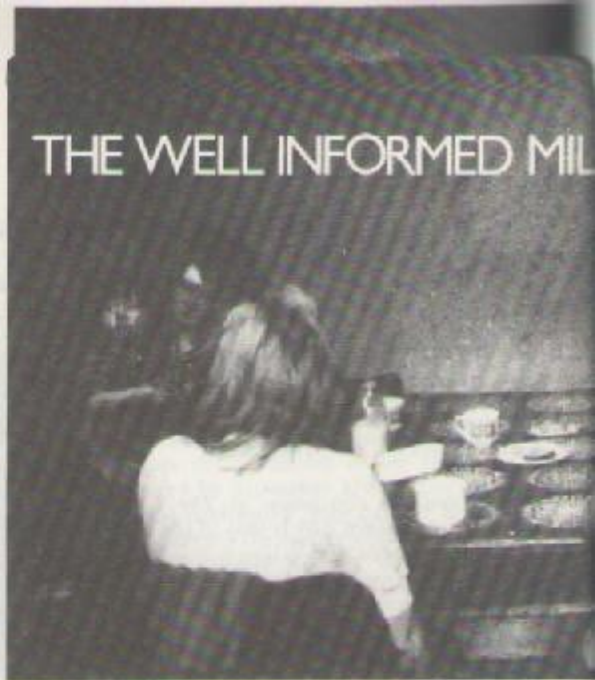
The authors are lawyers and members of the Rights of Women collective

£3.95 pbk

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Photos

- 1 Tenement in Blackhill, Glasgow
- 2 Interval House for Battered Women, Gorbals, Glasgow
- 3 Tea break, Blacksmith shop, Govan shipyard



BY GEORGE KEREVAN

Scotland is a foreign country. The pubs stay open all day. Currency is different. The *Daily Mirror* is not circulated. No one has heard of Whitsun. The only Shakespeare you do in school is *Macbeth*. And 25 per cent of the electorate favour immediate independence from England.

For the Left, ignorance of Scotland is compounded by a myth straight from the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth* — 'Scotland is more militant than England'. Yesterday: the Red Clyde, John Maclean and the Glasgow general strike of 1919. Today: the huge Labour vote and the Lee Jeans occupation. The myth is balanced by an apocalyptic view of a wholly right-wing Scottish National Party (SNP), behind which lurks a new Scots bourgeoisie grown fat on North Sea oil profits.

But in 1981 neither a vague feeling that Scotland has quaint cultural differences nor a mystical faith in Scots militancy are sufficient to understand the political processes at work north of the border. The heroic symbol of the Lee Jeans occupation cannot hide the historic defeat for the west of Scotland shop stewards movement in the pathetic collapse of Talbot Linwood. Inside the SNP, a left-wing strengthened by the arrival of Jim Sillars, is challenging for the leadership with calls for civil disobedience and Welsh-style strikes.

To understand these developments, we offer a quick consumer guide on what-to-read in those odd moments between work/meetings/sleep. (Insomniacs will have a distinct advantage.)

Nationalism and devolution

Socialists and the New Rise of Scottish Nationalism by Neil Williamson (*Battle of Ideas* supplement to *Red Weekly*, February 1977).

Best, if all too brief, analysis from a revolutionary marxist viewpoint. Scottish nationalism is seen not as a plot by oil-rich bankers, nor the result of economic deprivation, but as the response of a new Scots middle class to the political crisis of post-imperial Britain. The failure of Wilson and Callaghan drew in the skilled workers behind them. Arguing that socialists should support the campaign for an Assembly, Williamson wrote:

'In Scotland today it is necessary to link up

with this profound desire for change, no matter how confused and ambiguous its expression... As long as the mass of the population remain committed to bourgeois democracy, it is inevitable that their demands for change will be articulated through the forum of a Scottish Assembly... Our aim is to encourage and promote the masses to relate to the Assembly, using their own self-organisation, their own collective weight, their own political organisations, and through this to encourage the maximum distrust in practice of constitutionalism and electoralism'.

The Break-Up of Britain by Tom Nairn (NLB, 1977, £7.50).

Described by Neil Williamson as 'brilliant impressionism', this remains the only major marxist attempt to explain the rise of Scottish nationalism as part of an international process. The uneven development of world capitalism forces national bourgeoisies to modernise their economies, but this can only be done by mobilising 'their' working classes and intellectuals around a nationalist ideology. But where does socialism fit in, Tom?

Internal Colonialism by Michael Hechter (Routledge, 1975, £3.95).

Massively influential on the Scottish nationalist Left, Hechter claims that Ireland, Wales and Scotland were internally colonised by imperialist England. True for Ireland and Wales, but the Scots ruling class freely entered the union of 1707 to get a slice of the English imperialist cake. Scotland is no more an oppressed nation than Canada or Australia.

The Politics of Nationalism and Devolution by Henry Drucker and Gordon Brown (Longman, 1980, £3.95).

Curious damp squib from two Scottish Labourites who have figured prominently in the fight to get the party to honour its devolution commitment. Their reasons for the failure of devolution: fear of the expense and the bureaucracy. This is possibly true for Edinburgh lawyers but hardly for the working class voters: the majority of those voting supported Home Rule. The failure of the referendum lay rather (1) in the rule that 40 per cent of those eligible to vote must vote yes, which the *Labour Left* imposed as a wrecking device. And (2) in the general working class feeling that devolution divorced from socialist policies was not immediately relevant to fighting off the impending arrival of mass unemployment. However, after two years of Thatcher, opinion polls show a massive 85 per

cent of the electorate in favour of an Assembly with full powers to deal with unemployment.

Drucker and Brown imply that any future devolution is dependent on a complete overhaul of the British constitution. Certainly the roots of support for Home Rule lie in the crisis of the Tory-dominated ruling bloc. But devolution will not be brought about by the legalistic drafters of ever more sophisticated constitutions. The genie of proportional representation and growing popular disenchantment with Thatcher will throw the initiative into the hands of the Scottish masses. Which is why revolutionaries must continue to support the call for a Scottish Assembly free to determine its own powers.

The Scottish labour movement

No Mean Fighter by Harry McShane (Pluto, 1978, £3.95)

Anecdotal biography of a militant ninety years young and still an active, revolutionary. The book provides a fascinating account of the Red Clyde during the First World War, the unemployment struggles of the thirties and Harry's break with the CP in the fifties but itself exhibits the syndicalist weakness of Clydeside militancy: the Labour Party hardly gets a mention.

Revolt on the Clyde by Willie Gallacher (Lawrence & Wishart, 1978, £2.75).

As readable as Harold Robbins, and as fictional, this is a reprint of Gallacher's 1936 memoir of his leadership of the Clyde shop stewards during and after the Great War. A classic Stalinist rewrite of history, Gallacher poses as a comrade of John Maclean, while in reality he expelled the Maclean group from the Clyde Workers' Committee when they denounced his refusal to oppose the war in practice. The book contains the famous ultra-left assessment of the 1919 Glasgow general strike: 'We could easily have persuaded the soldiers to come out and Glasgow would have been ours.' But only a few months earlier the German shop stewards launched a real uprising in similar circumstances which ended in massacre and the murder of Rosa Luxemburg. The isolation of the syndicalist-led Clyde stewards from the mass of workers who had just voted for Lloyd George demanded united-front politics — not an insurrection in one city which would have been drowned in blood.

TANT'S GUIDE TO SCOTLAND



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Photos by
Larry Herman

John Maclean by Nan Milton (Pluto, 1973, £3.50); *In the Rapids of Revolution* by John Maclean (Allison & Busby, 1978, £3.50).

Maclean's daughter Nan provides a first class political biography of the real revolutionary from Scotland, where a mixture of Calvinist theoretical culture and the immigration of the oppressed Irish and Highlanders created fertile ground for marxism to penetrate the leadership of the labour movement. Read in conjunction with Maclean's fragmentary writings, it reveals his acute perception of the syndicalist weakness of the early CP. In the context of the Irish War of Independence, Maclean's espousal of Scottish republicanism can be seen as a brilliant, if limited, attempt to open up a popular revolutionary alternative. His failure lay not at all in his nationalism but in his inability to relate to the emergence of the Labour Party as a mass force and his explicit rejection of the united front tactic.

General histories

The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class by JD Young (Croom Helm, 1979, £9.95).

Attempted Scots version of EP Thompson's monumental *Making of the English Working Class*, by ardent left-wing nationalist. Spoiled by its devotion both to Thompson's populism and to the idea that Scotland is an internal colony.

A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830 by TC Smout (Fontana, 1975, £1.95).

A professional anti-Marxist liberal, Smout is the leading historian in Scotland. This commercially successful and highly readable history-from-below is Scotland without the Kings and Queens.

A History of Scotland by JD Mackie (Pelican, 2nd edition 1978, £1.50).

Standard political history, but mawkish towards the end: 'Scotland is proud that she gave to the steadfast King George VI the brave Queen who stood by him in the evil day.' Actually, Scotland resolutely ignored the Jubilee.

Scottish Capitalism edited by Tony Dickson (Lawrence & Wishart, 1980, £9.50). The CP's version of Scottish history in a series of potted essays, with a paperback edition on the way. The book should have rescued us from the errors of the above-mentioned bourgeois historians; instead it falls into the non-Marxist trap of assuming Scotland to be an

essentially unchanged national entity stretching down from Roman times. The chapter by John Foster, leader of the Stalinist wing of the Glasgow CP, tells us that Scottish national consciousness was founded in tenth century resistance to Vikings. As a result, the book has trouble explaining why nationalism has emerged with a bang in Late Capitalism, except in fatuous terms of twentieth century resistance to London bureaucrats.

Perniciously, the invention of a timeless, classless Scottish nationality provides ideological sustenance for the Scottish CP's perennial hunt for someone with whom to make an anti-monopoly alliance. (Witness last year's Scottish TUC-sponsored Assembly on Unemployment, to which the STUC's CP leadership invited the Scottish Tory Party). The final chapter of *Scottish Capitalism*, an uncritical hymn of praise to the CP's long time (but eroding) control of the Scots trade union machinery, contains the priceless gem that there has never been any rank and file opposition to the policies of the STUC. Possibly not from the Tories.

Economic background

An Anatomy of Scottish Capitalism by J Scott and M Hughes (Croom Helm, 1980, £10.95).

Powerful empirical study which definitively proves there is a distinct Scottish bourgeoisie. Scotland is one of the most capital-rich countries in the world but it's all invested abroad. *Scotland 1980* edited by D Mackay (Q Press, 1977, £2.40). Ideologues of the new Scottish bourgeoisie tell us how independent capitalist Scotland will fare provided it curbs the unions and stays in NATO.

Who Owns Scotland by John McEwen (Polygon, 1981).

Justly famous exposé of how much of Scotland is in the hands of the multinationals and the aristocracy: for example Willie Whitelaw 'owns' Stirlingshire. The overcrowded towns leave most of what is the northern third of Britain free for grouse shooting. One day the grouse will have their revenge.

Women's oppression

Scottish Woman's Place By E Hunter. (EUSPB, 1978).

Useful guide to the distinct legal and economic situation of women in Scotland,

where petty bourgeois Calvinism and the 'hard man' ethic of lumpen proletarian Glasgow combine to produce a particularly unpleasant MacHismo. For regular coverage of the women's movement in Scotland see the excellent local feminist journal *Msprint*.

Fiction

If mentally exhausted by all of the above, try some of the good modern Scots novels. Not necessarily left-wing but have a feeling for the place and times: *A Green Tree in Geddee* and *The Wind Shifts* by Alan Sharp; *Docherty* by William McIlvanney; *Its Colours They are Fine*, a brilliant recreation of Scots Orange Loyalist mentality by Allan Spence; *From Scenes Like These* by Gordon Williams; *The Dear Green Place* by Archie Hind.

Journals

Finally, as a means of keeping up with current Scots political debate, read *The Bulletin of Scottish Politics* (£1.25) edited by Tom Nairn which provides a platform for socialist supporters of self-determination, including the IMG and an international forum for Marxist theories of nationalism through good English translations of European writings. The first issue even contains a riposte from Nairn to a Neil Williamson article in *International*. Alternately praised and damned as a Scottish *New Left Review*, the *Bulletin* is the only serious left publication in Scotland... Which says a lot about how far the left has still to travel in understanding Alba Soisialach.

Books mentioned in this guide can be obtained from First of May Bookshop, 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh. (phone: 031-225 2612). Except where books are only published in hardback, the price quoted is for the paperback edition. Subscription information for *Msprint*: Clare Gorven, 12 Halmyre St, Edinburgh; for *The Bulletin of Scottish Politics*: 58 Queens St, Edinburgh.

Further reading guides of this kind are planned for future issues of *International*. Suggestions for further topics will be welcomed; so will offers to contribute guides, reviews or review articles. Please write to: Reviews Editor, *International*, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

AFTER ZIMBABWE

BY JOHN BLAIR

Alex Callinicos: *Southern Africa after Zimbabwe*, (Pluto Press, 1981, £2.95), *Review of African Political Economy* No 18 (1981, £1.50)

The state that emerged in Zimbabwe after the ZANU-Patriotic Front election victory of February 1980 has surprised many on both left and right. Tory racists predicted that the government of the 'terrorist Mugabe' would preside over a wholesale exodus of whites, the collapse of the economy and a period of anarchy and retribution.

Many on the left took rhetoric for reality and saw the result as heralding a transition to socialism. A year later events have confirmed neither set of fears or hopes. The new regime eased itself into the driving seat with the apparently unquestioning assistance of its former battlefield opponents and the uneasy aid of the Soames-directed British team that had spent the election campaign manoeuvring to prevent its victory.

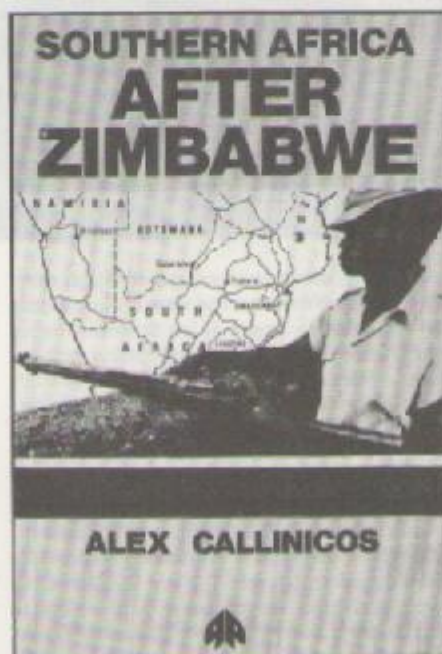
Two substantial challenges have been met head on and apparently squashed by the new government. One came immediately after its election from a working class long cowed by repression and now hoping to gain some of the fruits of independence. A series of strikes swept through the main towns and industries. Most were around wage demands although some made a more fundamental challenge to long-resented white managerial authority.

There was however no national co-ordination of these actions able to lead a fight for the government to come clean on its promises and implement a programme of change in the interests of the working masses. This made it easy for Mugabe's team to condemn the strikes as a challenge to stability and prospects of renewed economic development. The police and existing legal framework were used to crush the strike wave. New legal minima were established which gave increases only to the very lowest paid and actually gave some employers an excuse for lowering wages.

The second challenge simmered continually from the pre-election period when the former guerrilla armies were rounded up into a series of encampments under the effective control of their former opponents. It found its fiercest expression in the fighting in Bulawayo earlier this year between the ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA elements. This was a product of the pent-up frustration of freedom fighters whose role in defeating the Smith/Muzorewa regime appeared to have been forgotten by the government.

It was unfortunately expressed in a vicious faction fight whose main victims were local civilians; this played straight into the hands of the government by further increasing their isolation from the rest of the population.

The new book of Alex Callinicos, designated a sequel to his previous work with John Rogers, *Southern Africa after Soweto* (Pluto 1977), deals in its first part with some



of these developments. Its detailed concentration on these developments and on the recent evolution of the South African state and reaction by blacks makes it far more useful than the previous work which, ranging over the entire sub-continent, was bitty and often wrong. Callinicos gives a broadly accurate description of the negotiations, elections and first six months of ZANU rule. He focusses on the electoral commitment to socialism and subsequent evolution to best defender of the status quo. Particularly strong is his explanation of how the ZANU model for the future means the elimination of democratic participation, competing political parties and any autonomous mass organisations.

Unfortunately the attempt to locate these events theoretically scarcely goes beyond one quotation from Luxembourg's *Reform or Revolution*. It would have been more useful to have placed the Zimbabwean experience within the whole context of African nationalism over the past 20 years.

ZANU is by no means the first organisation to combine socialist rhetoric during the struggle for independence, and even for many years afterwards, with policies that deepen integration into the capitalist world. This is especially characteristic of movements that have engaged in armed struggle which entailed more than simply verbal support from the masses. Contrary to assumptions made in much academic writing of the early 1970s this was by no means a guarantee of a movement's socialist credentials.

It would have been particularly useful to have compared ZANU with its peers in Angola and Mozambique, and to have developed some conclusions around the important comment made at the end of the book about South Africa: 'There is a danger that concentration exclusively on the organisation

of armed struggle will lead to the creation of a guerrilla army that operates as a military elite alienated from the mass of the population.'

The point, however, needs to be refined. In Angola and Mozambique it is clear that guerrilla cadre have slotted rapidly into positions in the new state. What leaves the situation in Zimbabwe temporarily a good deal more open is that the majority of freedom fighters responsible for the ZANU victory are still in encampments policed by their former opponents with the collaboration of their leaders.

For the past five years the *Review of African Political Economy* has been the most stimulating and politically useful English-language journal on the affairs of the continent. Its latest edition deals overwhelmingly with Zimbabwe and, as usual, combines comment on contemporary developments with historical analysis. Luke Malaba's piece on African Labour outlines the mechanisms of its control from the 1930s to 1970s and poses a series of questions about the possible development of working class organisations independent of the nationalist movement.

Cliffe, Mpfu and Munslow provide an extremely interesting account of the 1980 elections. Particularly important is their refutation of the popular myth that ZANU and ZAPU are based on the 'tribal' affiliation of respectively Shona and Ndebele-speaking peoples. They show that Zimbabweans voted *irrespective of their language groups* for the parties whose fighters had been the most active within their areas.

The high quality of the contributions, however, contrasts dramatically with the article written under the pseudonym 'Peter Yates'. Although it doesn't acknowledge its ancestry, its stagist argument is clearly Stalinist in derivation: 'ZANU PF rightly argues that the stage of national democratic revolution in Zimbabwe has been successfully achieved. ZANU PF has now embarked upon the socialist revolutionary phase.' (p 68) 'Ultra-leftists' unjustly accuse ZANU of having 'sold out to imperialism', Yates continues, and do not comprehend the objective situation in which 'all patriots and revolutionaries have to rally behind ZANU-PF' and in which 'it is wishful thinking and suicidal to establish an independent workers' party'.

After this tirade it is surprising but perhaps a little reassuring to find that some realities penetrate Yates' consciousness. After a lame attempt to present the new government's policies in health and education (where fee-paying and therefore effective racial segregation still remains), Yates concedes that ZANU has some problems which, he argues, can only be resolved by holding a party congress. Yates concludes:

'We cannot overlook the fact that the outcome of such a congress is likely to see the emergence of a preponderance of traditionalist, conservative, petty bourgeois elements at the expense of the movement's more progressive wing...'

We agree — except that we don't think it's necessary to wait for a congress to see this happening. *And that's precisely why it would be 'wishful thinking and suicidal' not to take every step possible towards establishing an independent workers' party now.*

ALTERNATIVE ECONOMICS

BY ALAN FREEMAN

Sam Aaronovitch: *The Road From Thatcherism*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1981, £2.95, London CSE Working Group: *The Alternative Economic Strategy*, CSE Books, 1980, £2.50

These two books have a great merit in common; they start from a premise the whole left supports: that the government should spend more money on investment and welfare. This not only warms the hearts of Labour Party members; it's so orthodox it appears in the Transitional Programme.

Aaronovitch's book has a special merit of its own: a well substantiated proof that Britain's particularly dramatic economic decline is a legacy of the end of its empire which has left a society singularly incapable of domestic investment. Unfortunately he draws an insupportable conclusion: that we should try and correct this situation by means of import controls and without taking direct control over the investment mechanism.

His book shares a third merit with the London CSE book. They both recognise that the employers and bankers no longer approve of government spending. As Tony Benn has put it: 'the post-1945 consensus has broken down'.

These three points lay a basis on which revolutionary socialists can lead a dialogue with supporters of the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). But there is a problem. There is no such thing as *the* AES. There is an economic policy package consisting of more public spending and more public ownership, planning agreements, withdrawal from the EEC and import controls, with incomes policy as an optional extra. Everyone from Jim Callaghan to Geoff Hodgson shelters under this umbrella nursing as many different political strategies as there are left sects.

The most cynical supporters of the AES are the trade union bureaucrats and the Callaghan wing of the Labour Party whose support is really only verbal and who treats the AES as a kit of parts to be selected from according to the job in hand. The Foot current, despite its good intentions, is essentially in the same camp as it accepts Callaghan's basic premise, that faced with an economic crisis, a Labour government's first responsibility is to restore profitability and business confidence.

Benn wants to implement the AES regardless of whether the capitalists squeak but holds that it must be done by peaceful and constitutional means. Finally a small left current sees the AES as a kind of 'transitional' programme which will create conditions for the workers to win control of the economy piece by piece as the capitalists expose themselves by their refusal to co-operate in an eminently sensible set of policies.

London CSE seem to be halfway between the third and fourth position. Their book is haunted by an uneasy recognition that perhaps the capitalists might fight back. They are even honest enough to explain why their policies will not work: 'the exercise of direct control by government or the trade unions

THE ROAD FROM THATCHERISM

THE ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC STRATEGY
SAM AARONOVITCH



would simply harden the opposition of capital and could result in an all-out investment strike'.

Aaronovitch understands another problem: 'such a government would arouse enormous expectations which cannot all be fulfilled and certainly not all be met with speed... if high expectations combine with difficulties that might come from hostility and sabotage, as well as with other temporary setbacks, there could be a loss of popular support which would be systematically exploited by opponents of popular change'.

But this is precisely the point at which the divergence between a revolutionary and a reformist strategy becomes most important. A revolutionary strategy recognises that the hostility of the capitalists will clash with the expectations of the masses and opts to side with the masses regardless of the 'constitutionality' of what they do.

It urges them to take over factories the capitalists try to close, to seize control of bank accounts the capitalists are trying to transfer abroad, to disarm the repressive forces like the army and Special Patrol Group who will be used to try and stop these 'illegal' actions, to start running production according to social need rather than profitability, and to replace the present hierarchic and unelected state machine with a democratic popular state which will be loyal to the working class because it is elected by workers and recallable by them. This proposal Aaronovitch rejects as 'relevant only to Russia in 1917'.

Aaronovitch and London CSE try to maintain, without much historical justification, that a democratic state can be created gradually, peacefully and constitutionally. It is one thing to believe that this is possible. Everyone is entitled to their own utopia. But it is another thing to try and hold back or compromise the legitimate demands of the workers *in order* to persuade the capitalists to accept a halfway house. This is where the road to Callaghanism starts.

THE ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC STRATEGY

A LABOUR MOVEMENT RESPONSE TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS



CSE LONDON WORKING GROUP

Both books are riddled with such compromises. They discuss the possibility of incomes policy under capitalism at great length. Aaronovitch sets the very low target of nationalising only 20 per cent of manufacturing industry. Worse still, they maintain a concept of democratisation which is not at all democratic: the idea of *sharing* decision-making power with management, shareholders and the state.

All these policies will only work if the capitalists agree. But if they don't, there is nothing we can do because both books insist that the workers must follow a 'constitutional road' even though capital itself has no respect for its own constitution. Both Aaronovitch and London CSE demonstrate clearly the quandary of the Labour left by proclaiming vigorously the need for 'compulsory planning agreements' — a contradiction in terms if ever there was one. If it is an agreement, it can not be compulsory. If it is compulsory it will not be enforced by Whitehall so who will enforce it? The only possible answer is the workers themselves by taking on both management and the state: but this solution is ruled out by an insistence on 'constitutionality'.

But all is not gloom. At least the British socialist movement is now shifting the terrain of its debates. We no longer discuss across a great gulf with one side sitting in parliament refusing to mobilise the workers and the other mobilising the workers but refusing to sit in parliament.

If these two books do nothing else, they register the dawn of a new debate — a much more European debate — which is about what combination of both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary tactics will secure the workers their just demands.

F.I. News

CAPITALISM ON TRIAL IN THE USA

BY TOM MARTIN

One of the most sensational cases in US legal history is approaching its third month of trial at the Federal Courthouse here in Foley Square. Every day the court hears further testimony on the crimes of the defendants. Spying. Phone-tapping. Mail interception. Burglaries by the score. Terrorist acts. It's all there. Most of it isn't even disputed any more. Tom Martin reports from New York City on the trial the media can't find space to report.

Perhaps it's something to do with the defendants. After all this isn't just any old case. On trial are the rulers of the mightiest power the world has ever seen: the United States government and its agencies. And thrown into question is the whole apparatus by which the tiny minority capitalist class maintains its rule over the vast majority of people in this country.

This case has been nearly eight years in the making. Putting the US government and its agencies on trial are the Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party and its affiliate, the Young Socialist Alliance. They are demanding no less than \$40m in damages for illegal acts by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other government agencies, as well as an injunction to bar further illegal government activity against them. Furthermore, they are seeking a declaration that the legislation used by the government to justify its harassment — including the notorious Smith and Voorhis Acts — is unconstitutional.

What the case reveals, however, goes far wider than the facts of government surveillance. Most significant is that it could be brought at all. Says SWP national secretary Jack Barnes: 'If you had filed this suit in the 1950s, you would have been laughed right out of court'.

The thinking behind the SWP's decision to file the suit in July 1973 was explained by party leader Larry Seigle in a talk to a socialist education conference last year:

'Our decision to proceed was based on sizing up the shift that was occurring in the relationship of class forces on a world scale, and the long-term tactical problems and divisions that this would keep producing for the capitalist class. The move we were making in 1973 could not have been made with success twenty, ten, or even five years earlier. We had to go through the Vietnam War, the end of the long economic expansion, and Watergate and all that went with it, before we could consider doing what we have done.

'What was involved was a small party of revolutionary Marxists going up politically and legally against the secret police. Taking them on directly and aggressively. We know that a small group, with the right ideas, with the right degree of self-confidence, and with the right timing, can have a huge impact. A small organisation acting in a bold way in the interests of an entire class can set an example and inspire broader forces to move. We decided that this was a good time to go after the FBI. And everything we said then is more true now.'

Of that there can be no doubt at all. As the suit unfolds in the Foley Square courthouse, SWP and YSA members have been able to take the issues into a series of mobilisations by working people against the policies of the Reagan administ-

ration. They have won a ready hearing among the 160,000 members of the United Mine Workers of America on strike for a new contract since the beginning of April; among the 100,000 who marched on the Pentagon on 3 May to demand an end to US support for the El Salvador junta; among the 25,000 railworkers who demonstrated in Washington just a few days earlier against Reagan's budget cuts; among the millions of black people demanding an end to the racist killings in Atlanta.

What is happening in the Foley Square courthouse is part of a growing challenge by American working people to the direction of capitalist politics today. That is why the government finds itself in the unusual position of defendant rather than plaintiff. And by taking the issue into the courts the Trotskyists have been able not just to expose the government's illegal activities, but also to explain in some detail the alternative kind of society they would like to see — and how it can be achieved. Capitalism itself is on trial. So it is not surprising that its mouthpieces in the media would rather working people didn't get the facts about it.

When the SWP and YSA filed suit in 1973 they did not have too much to go on. Larry Seigle explains:

'We sat down with our legal staff and drew up what lawyers call a complaint, in which you outline your case. In the complaint, we charged that the government, the FBI and other secret police agencies have been involved in a conspiracy since 1938 to disrupt the SWP ... We charged that this conspiracy involved the use of informers, burglaries, blacklists, wiretaps, bugs, mail openings, and other illegal acts. We charged that the cops collaborated with right-wing terrorists in physical attacks against the party and the YSA. We put into this complaint everything that we could think of, everything that the history of the workers' movement since 1848 shows that the secret police do.

'Of course, we had no evidence. We had no proof. But we now know that inside the government, in the Justice Department, at the FBI, inside the White House, our complaint hit like a bombshell. Because as it turns out, it was all true. Exactly, precisely, true. Every "wild accusation" that we put in the complaint hit home.'

The first phase of the suit was marked by the accumulation of huge stacks of evidence to show that the FBI and other government agencies were guilty of everything charged by the SWP/YSA — and more. As Jack Barnes put it in court: 'We knew all kinds of wrongdoing had been done, but the scope of it was fantastic.'

Among other things, information that the FBI was forced to release showed that:

* FBI agents broke into the SWP national headquarters at least 94 times in one six-year period. More than 8,000 letters, many of them personal, were photographed and filed; bugging devices were installed.

* Sixty-six members of the SWP and YSA in 1976 were FBI informers. In all 316 informers had infiltrated the party and YSA between 1960 and 1976. A further 1300 non-members had also been urged to spy on the Trotskyists' activities. A sample of 18 informer files showed each cost the taxpayer an average \$20,000.

* FBI agents inspired or collaborated with attacks by right-wing thugs on SWP/YSA offices and bookstores.

* Poison-pen letters were sent to employers of SWP members; several lost their jobs as a result.

* Anonymous leaflets were widely distributed red-baiting the role played by the SWP and YSA in the anti-war movement.

Much — though by no means all — of this activity was part of the COINTELPRO program launched by the FBI in 1961 with the aim of destroying the SWP and YSA. One of the things that most concerned the agency, according to a memo from

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FBI director J Edgar Hoover dated 12 October 1961, was that: 'The Socialist Workers Party has, over the past several years, been openly espousing its line on a local and national basis through running candidates for public office.' In other words, it was guilty of putting forward its ideas publicly.

What came out between 1973 and 1976 made it impossible for the FBI to go on pretending its hands were clean. At the same time it couldn't prove any illegal activity on the part of the SWP. So the government changed tack. Maybe the FBI had done some bad — even illegal — things after all. But the Justice Department would get after those responsible. And it certainly wouldn't happen again. In September 1976 it was announced that the FBI had been told to halt its 38-year-long investigation of the SWP. Couldn't the party call the whole thing off now?

As an incentive, the government even proposed an out-of-court settlement which would bring the SWP and YSA several million dollars in damages. But the Trotskyists flatly turned down the offer, seeing it as a desperate attempt to pretend the FBI had changed its spots and prevent the full facts of government illegality and violence from being aired publicly.

Just how desperate the government was became clear in 1977 when the trial judge, Thomas P Griesa, ordered the FBI to turn over 18 informer files to the SWP. When attorney general Griffin Bell refused, Griesa cited him for contempt of court. Bell was only saved from going to jail when the Court of Appeals overturned the contempt citation, saying in effect that the attorney general — the nation's chief law officer — is above the law!

This ruling can be seen as key in determining the government's approach to the third phase of the suit, when it became clear that the SWP and YSA would not settle but would pursue the matter to open trial. As one government pre-trial document put it: 'The issue is whether the government has a right to keep itself informed of the activities of groups that openly advocate revolutionary change... even if such advocacy might be within the letter of the law.'

This was confirmed by FBI special agent Charles Mandigo when he took the stand on 13 April. Mandigo criticised the 'assumption that the investigations of the plaintiffs can be justified on strictly a list of possible criminal violations. It is not the case. There is independent authority underneath the President of the United States to conduct national security investigations.'

In effect, the defence is now claiming that the President, the US government, and all its agencies are simply exempt from the due processes of the law: the Bill of Rights and the Constitution. They make the rules — yet they can't afford to play by them. What greater tribute could there be to the power of the Trotskyists' ideas? For that is what is unambiguously at stake in this trial: the *ideas* of the SWP and the YSA. And that is just where the government is most vulnerable.

One of its latest attempts to regain the offensive has been a declaration by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) that it is considering whether non-citizen SWP 'members or affiliates' can be excluded or deported on the basis that the party advocates the 'doctrines of world communism' — defined as 'totalitarian dictatorship' by the Immigration and Naturalisation Act of 1952. The obvious intention is to intimidate non-citizens from having anything to do with the SWP.

But who are really the 'totalitarians'? The Trotskyists have taken great pains to explain in court the ideas of workers' democracy: the rule of the majority through soviet-type institutions, the right of opponents to freedom of speech and association (including the formation of parties) unless they forcibly attempt to overthrow proletarian rule and so on. In particular the SWP leaders have stressed their identification with the struggle for democratic rights led by Solidarity in Poland.

As an editorial in the SWP's paper *The Militant* pointed

out: 'Socialists are the firmest opponents of totalitarian dictatorship. It is the government's practices — exposed in the current trial — that bear the unmistakable stamp of totalitarianism.'

Another major point of discussion has been the question of violence, or 'terrorism' as the government crudely describes it on occasion. The SWP denies that it advocates violence. But nor does it renounce it, either. Its 1980 presidential candidate, Andrew Pulley, put the Marxist position in a nutshell when he explained to the judge:

'What I am saying, your Honour, is that the United States government will not tolerate the majority of the American people to democratically and orderly change things. This is why our government has carried out coups d'etat all over the world and set up totalitarian regimes... That is why they put the Shah in power and kept him in power, trained people in the most advanced techniques of terrorism...'

'As proven by the people in Cuba, and American history also, when the masses of people decide to change society fundamentally they are confronted by force and violence by the existing government and right-wing organisations, who use terror to maintain the status quo. The people of Cuba and elsewhere, in the US Civil War, the war against the British, showed that the masses have to defend themselves effectively to move forward.'

What the government cannot understand is that the SWP and YSA fight openly for the ideas they believe in. Hours and hours are spent by the defence attorneys in trying to 'trick' the Trotskyists into saying something else. In so doing they reveal very graphically the mentality of capitalist politicians who promise one thing and do the exact opposite. And at the same time they give the SWP and YSA witnesses an unparalleled opportunity to dissect the operations of the capitalist state and put forward the Marxist alternative.

The SWP and YSA know that state harassment of their activities won't stop whatever the outcome of the trial. But then their aims were always wider than that. As Andrew Pulley put it in a statement just before the trial opened: 'Racist attacks, violence and undemocratic practices are not the policies of just one individual politician, political party, or government agency. They are not an aberration. The tiny handful of bankers and businessmen who rule this country, and the Democratic and Republican parties that serve their interests, *must use* these practices to preserve their profits, property, and political rule.'

In pressing this suit to highlight the methods of capitalist rule, the SWP and YSA are acting on behalf of the millions of victims of US imperialism around the world and hastening the day of its downfall. And in doing so they have earned widespread recognition from other opponents of the White House administration. Perhaps it was put best by noted black entertainer and civil rights activist Dick Gregory:

'I'm glad the Socialist Workers Party has carried the fight through to the end and not faltered, but has gotten stronger and stronger. There are a lot of people that the government can appeal to with money but I thank God the Socialist Workers Party is not one of them.'

Having failed to buy the SWP and YSA, the American capitalists are now trying to silence them through a media boycott of the trial. They have good cause to fear that working people might find the Trotskyists' ideas attractive at a time when Reagan's new budget seeks to drive down living standards in order to finance further war expenditure.

But just as the SWP has daily testified to its internationalism in the Foley Square courthouse, so socialists around the world can help to break through this media boycott by getting out the facts of the case through every means possible. The comrades of the SWP and YSA, who have pitted their tiny resources against the most powerful ruling class in the world, are surely entitled to expect no less.

British Features

THE POLITICS OF PORNOGRAPHY: CA

By Pat Masters & Jane Shallice

Feminists are slowly and unsurely engaging in a dialogue to develop a political programme about pornography. In the USA feminist groups against pornography were formed five or six years ago. In this country we have seen the development of Reclaim the Night actions and the formation of Women Against Violence Against Women groups.

The demands that are raised and the actions suggested are often framed in terms of increased censorship and suppression of sexist and pornographic images. Many of the arguments appear to assume an obvious relationship between pornography and violence.

This assumption is based on the ideas held by some sections of the women's movement — rooting women's oppression in male sexuality alone: implying that liberation for women will only be possible after the destruction of that sexual power. Pat Masters and Jane Shallice argue not for censorship but for a campaign in the labour movement to confront that sexual power.

Sexuality is a commonsense category. It is 'known' and 'understood' by everyone without any real analysis of what it is or how it is formed. Sexuality is 'known' to be a basic human biological drive. Male sexuality is said to be centralised in sexual activity; female sexuality in sexual attractiveness. Male sexuality is understood to be active, spontaneous, imperious and centrally genital, easily aroused by exposure to 'objects' and images and fantasies. Female sexuality is said to be bound by responses to the male, bound within relationships with men, dormant until aroused by a man.

However, this commonsense definition of sexuality has been criticised profoundly by feminists in the last ten years. Cross-cultural and historical evidence has shown that concepts of sexuality vary greatly from society to society and may change over time. Feminists have also argued that the idea of a biologically based sex-drive insufficiently accounts for the many social attitudes and beliefs which surround sexuality. In every society there are absurd and contradictory meanings attached to male and female sexuality which bear little relationship to biological sex.

Pornography

Pornography at one level appears to reflect the fact that sexuality is a complex process of social learning in which fantasy is an important component. But at the most immediate and obvious level it reflects an ideological notion of sexuality in which women function only as the objects of male pleasure. To develop an analysis of pornography, we have to attempt to

clarify the term.

'Pornography' is not a value free category. It has attached to it very obvious meanings that are sententious and prescriptive. What is encompassed by the term will be negotiated by changing social relationships within society: what we are witnessing at present, particularly in the campaigns of the women's movement against sexist images in advertising, is an example of this renegotiation or fight to define what is pornographic.

Although all feminists have been sharply critical of most pornography, any consensus about our actions about it has been difficult to find. We have no commonly accepted definitions. The Festival of Light campaigns to 'protect' us from pornography which it defines as: 'a deliberate unconcealed incitement to promiscuity and to homosexual and other vice. Its disruptive effect on married life must be obvious to all who have not entirely abrogated the use of common sense'. Meanwhile the most elegant magazines advertise perfumes and diamonds with rape images. Thus we have to define our targets with care.

The modern porn industry has attempted to appropriate 'female sexual liberation'. In Victorian porn men played out their fantasies with prostitutes or servants, women who were obviously class inferiors, in which the exploitative nature of the relationship was unambiguous. Today pornography sometimes features allegedly 'liberated' women as sex partners — some of it even claims to represent women's fantasies.

The feminist critique of pornography has exposed issues which are far from simple questions of vulgarity. Pornography often connects sexual pleasure with violence towards and humiliation of others, especially women. The misogynist and rape content of pornography and advertising has increased in the last decade, to the extent that many feminists consider pornography to be a form of terrorism, used like rape itself to enforce women's subordination.

Fantasy and pornography

The essential element for the development of pornography is the confinement of sexuality to a separate and insulated sphere of human existence. The bourgeois patriarchal family is the perfect vehicle for this as it both limits and intensifies the sexual expression of individuals.



British Features

THE LEFT STALK THE LINE?

Pornography is the exploitation of sexuality, through the exploitation of sexual fantasy. It is the production of a commodity which is produced for men as the sexually 'active', the sexually dominant and dominating group. However fantasies are not just plucked from the air materialising randomly; they are based on people's conceptions of their own sexuality, a sexuality that is formed within unequal social and economic relations between men and women. We are not arguing that there is a direct causal relationship (a schematic $a+b=c$) between dominant ideology, social values and behaviour and the development of particular fantasies, but clearly they are interlinked and intermeshed.

Sexual fantasy and pornography, a linked commodity form, are inherently secretive, guilt-ridden and private within this society. It is pornography, along with other social products, which forms part of the discourse on sexuality, within which individuals are seeking to define and construct their own sexuality.

Pornography as sexual liberation

Helen Longino¹ a feminist philosopher, argues that one of the main aspects of youth/student radicalisation of the 1960s and 1970s was sexual rebellion which freed various modes of sexual behaviour from the constraints of social disapproval but also made possible a flood of pornographic material. According to figures provided by Women Against Violence in Pornography in Media (WAVPM) in the United States, the number of pornographic magazines available at news-stands has grown from none in 1953 to forty in 1977, and there are correspondingly dramatic increases in sales of pornographic films. In the USA today, the pornography industry has a turnover of \$4 billion.

Traditionally, pornography was condemned as immoral, it was objectionable to describe explicitly or represent parts of the body or sexual behaviour for the purpose of inducing sexual stimulation or pleasure on the part of the reader or viewer. This view subordinates sex to procreation and condemns all sexual interactions outside legitimated marriage. It is this code, argues Longino, that was being rebelled against in the 1960s, and which has given way in many capitalist countries to more open standards of sexual behaviour.

She further points out that: 'one of the beneficial results has

been a growing acceptance of the distinction between questions of sexual mores and questions of morality. Hence the old slogan "Make love not war" of the flower people and hippies'. This new morality implies that 'we cannot condemn forms of sexual behaviour, no matter how offensive we might find pornography. We must tolerate it in the name of freedom from illegitimate repression.' Feminists are, however, challenging this assumption and posing the question: *freedom for whom?* They are arguing that pornography trades on the degradation, exploitation and sexual subordination of women.

It has been argued, especially since the sixties, as part of the 'sexual liberation' of the adult population, that for the consumers of pornography, it is enjoyable, sexually arousing and aids the socialisation of male sexuality. It is said to be therapeutic for isolated men, and can be a 'release' for those men who are unable to have sexual relationships. A leading sex therapist in this country, who uses pornography in sex therapy states that: 'many men are shy and lonely through social diffidence and are also unadventurous in their thinking'.

But while pornography may be used for its 'therapeutic value', it may also be used to mould sexuality. Although, of course, the pornographic images of women are exaggerated they are not fundamentally at variance with the common images of women in society. As part of the 'sexual liberation' movement of the sixties, the argument in favour of pornography persuades women that they like the sexual activity that is desired by men.

From fantasy to the real thing

The producers of pornography, the capitalists, are involved in a large and evergrowing market. The profit motive lies behind moves towards more bizarre, more 'exciting' forms of hard core. If exposure to sexual images and fantasies inure the consumers, then there will be an obvious response from the capitalists to explore more bizarre and horrendous images.

One view of pornography is that its illicit nature is important for the men who consume it. But it is unquestionable that if overexposure to 'soft' porn deadens the market, the concomitant will be the use of children, the increasingly horrific violence used against women in the fantasies and images created, and the ultimate enactment of killing culminating in the 'snuff' movies.

As long as one views pornography only in terms of fantasy, one can ignore the use of children, women and men, in the creation of those images. As soon as pornography moves from the word to the photograph, the film or the video, it is necessary for the porn merchants to use real people, in the creation of the product. There is an immediate transference from the fantasy/image to the real and the ideology of the *real* becomes paramount. The autobiography of Linda Lovelace is the most recent example of the manner in which a woman was subjugated to actions and practices of which she appeared to approve. Only now, fourteen years later, is she able to begin to release herself from that oppression.

No longer is it possible to take the position that porn is simply fantasy and that society cannot control fantasy and human imagination. The traffic in children from South East Asia to the pornographic studios of Germany and Belgium, the raping of women to satisfy the 'needs' of men, the dismembering and mutilation of women in South America in order to satisfy the appetite for profits of the entrepreneurs of sexual fantasy, no longer are encompassed by the term fantasy; the people involved in the creation of the images are *real*.

A working definition of pornography, from a feminist perspective is presented by Longino: 'verbally or pictorially explicit representations of sexual behaviour that have as a distinguishing characteristic the degrading and demeaning portrayal of the role and status of the human female....as a mere



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sexual object to be exploited and manipulated sexually'. In pornographic books, magazines and films, women are represented as passive and as slavishly dependent upon men. To the extent that women's sexual pleasure is represented at all, it is subordinated to that of men and is never an *end in itself* as is the sexual pleasure of men. What pleases women is the use of their bodies to satisfy male desires. Thus the sexual objectification of women is common to all pornography.

Therefore Longino argues that 'pornography is not simply its representations of degrading and abusive sexual encounters, but describes sexual behaviour in such a way as to *endorse the degradation*'. Thus, what is being objected to is not sex or nudity but the form of *connection*.

Pornography and violence against women

In addition, women are beginning to connect the consumption of pornography with the committing of rape and other acts of sexual violence against women. Pornography and its relationship to violence are the main terms of reference in the debate. Whatever the causal relations are, clearly hard-core pornography is not innocent. In fact, the view that pornography leads to violence reflects not so much any new evidence or new study so much as a strongly felt belief that many people share. Arguments for intervention on pornography whether by the Festival of Light, the Williams Report, or some sections of the women's movement, are premised on the harm of pornography.

Susan Brownmiller, the author of *Against Our Will* believes the association between pornography and violence is obvious and that there is no need to wait for definitive evidence: 'We supply the ideology: it's for other people to come with statistics....Pornography is the theory; rape is the practice'. What attitude should feminists take towards the problematic question of a relationship between pornography and violence?

Beverly Brown², examining the grounds of a feminist intervention, says that the 'logic of intervention is dominated by the liberal argument that it is only harms that justify intervention, that harms must be demonstrable effects.... The Williams/Wolfenden formula, which itself begins from these premises, is emerging as the current legislative strategy for the management of a range of issues around sexuality'. Feminism argues differently, however, on the question of whether pornography is a direct cause of undeniable and great harms. For the search for a direct relationship between a violent act and the consumption of pornography misses the point. It is pornography's relationship to a sexist society which is harmful.

In the United States a group of researchers from Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) — formed in 1976 in California — viewed 26 pornographic films in San Francisco, in a three month period. Twenty one had rape scenes, sixteen had torture and bondage scenes, two were films for sexual stimulation. Feminist researchers also monitored pornographic magazines. The magazines were divided into two categories: blatantly violent magazines, usually only found in pornography shops, and the more familiar 'tabletop pornography' magazines. In a magazine called *Brutal Trio* three men successively kidnap a woman, a 12 year old girl, and a grandmother, and beat them senseless. After they have passed out they are raped and beaten again.

From films and miserable magazines in porn shops, to record album covers, to advertisements to *Vogue*, pornography has come to occupy its own niche in the communications and entertainment media and to acquire a quasi-institutional character. Its acceptance by the mass media, whatever the motivation, means a cultural endorsement of its message. The tolerance of representations of the rape, bondage and torture of women helps to create and maintain a climate more tolerant of the actual physical abuse of women. The tendency on the part of the legal system to view the victim of a rape as responsi-



ble for the crime against her — police telling women not to walk the streets at night, not to wear certain types of clothing are but manifestations of this. Pornography can be identified as being injurious to women insofar as it is the vehicle for the dissemination of a deep and vicious lie about women's sexuality. The diffusion of such a distorted view of women's nature in our society as it exists today supports sexist attitudes and thus reinforces the oppression and exploitation of women.

Why do women participate in pornographic production?

In a society that prides itself on the free choice of the individual, if women were to stop modelling for pornographic magazines and films then it is presumed that the industry would shut down. A former pornography model when asked 'How did you get started in the nude modelling business', replied: 'In 1967, just out of high school, I had run away from home.... "living in sin", with my boyfriend. I wasn't able to keep jobs I tried to get....I had no real skills....we ended up not having enough money to pay the rent....(her boyfriend) thought it was great....he felt proud because my job was a sign that I was a "sexy chick".....men would ask me, "Did you get off on it?"....if a woman showed disapproval of what I was doing, my boyfriend would say "she's just jealous that she can't do it"....I remember feeling nudity was okay and natural, so photos of it must be okay too — except that it didn't feel good....I stopped modelling in 1970, I was exhausted, I wasn't sleeping at night....

'I was physically sick from the long hours of work and I was getting bladder infections from the work conditions....concerning hard core movies: your standards go down - they're forced by circumstances. You become fearful that you'll never be able to work at anything else. You hook into the money, but that doesn't continue unless you'll do more, and more things, you don't want to do....Once you do hard core you can't ever go back to the more "legitimate" modelling....it was degrading and humiliating....since stopping modelling things won't be the same for me. My sex life has never been normal. I can't equate sex with affection. I have these images that never stop running in my head. They're fantasies of women as passive victims. All the scenes disgust me, but I can't stop them....I hate myself....(but) if I don't have them I don't get off sexually....feminists have no consciousness about what it is like out there....'

This women's story could be repeated a hundred fold and our campaigns musn't lose sight of the real women involved in

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Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS/DFU

the production of pornography. It is necessary to try and involve them in any strategies or actions that we may take.

Women fight back

In Sweden, total population 8 million, 30 million copies of pornographic magazines are sold annually. Many of these use children, and some specialise in third world children. There are pictures of small black children with gigantic penises in their mouths.

Feminists in Sweden have tried to use the 'indecent law', which states that you cannot earn money from other people's bodies, thereby outlawing pimping but not prostitution, to prohibit pornography on the grounds that pornographers are pimps. They have been unsuccessful to date. Several years ago, women attacked the largest newspaper in Stockholm, because they were running ads for pornographic theatres and shops. They invoked the indecency laws saying that the paper was a pimp — it was making money off women's bodies through its ads. Women organised from within and outside the paper — women journalists on the paper said they wanted a voice in the kinds of articles and ads which were carried. The paper eventually cut down its ads, ceased using pictures and 'blatant' words in ads for pornography shops.

In 1976 feminists in the United States were outraged by a billboard of a woman in chains with bruises on her legs and face, and a caption reading 'I'm black and blue from the Rolling Stones and I love it'. Warner Brothers were forced to remove the advertisement after feminists protested by demonstrating and holding a national press conference.

In Britain there have been Reclaim the Night demonstrations, pickets of the Alan Jones exhibition, demonstrations against the 'Miss World' contest, and sexist advertising covered with 'this exploits women' stickers. The establishment of rape crisis centres have been very important in influencing attitudes to sexual crimes. Conferences have been held to discuss what types of action are necessary to prevent sexual attacks on women. Women Against Violence Against Women have diligently picketed the Sutcliffe trial, and leafleted the public on the issues raised by the trial.

Is censorship the answer?

Censorship has been the suggested method of dealing with pornography: the Williams Report being the latest offering. This report argued for restrictions on availability rather than restrictions on production. Based on the assertion that there is an accepted distinction between public and private in sexuality, the

report aimed to reduce the visibility of pornography. In arguing that the personal is political, feminism opposes the argument that there should be guarantees of certain freedoms for sexual conduct: there is no inalienable right to the privacy of the sexual.

Pornography however is not a genre of expression separate and different from the rest of life, and cannot be treated whether hard or soft, crude or sophisticated, as an isolated social 'problem'. As Jill Pack³ argues 'by banning certain images, the ideology that informs them will not go away'. As a collective representation of sexual objectification of women, pornography differs from other feminist issues like rape or wife-battering, which are specific acts against individual women. A response to pornography calls for different solutions and new strategies and actions. We can respond to wife-beating and rape with legal action and by opening rape crisis centres and refuge shelters. But we cannot respond to pornography by calling for censorship. It would merely drive the pornographers and their customers underground while placing enormous power in the hands of the state.

The Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) in America have dropped their campaign for censorship. This was primarily because of the problems that were highlighted in the many discussions that the women's movement held. Censorship legislation would lump together books such as *Our Bodies Ourselves*, *Liberating Masturbation* and *Rubyfruit Jungle*. *Spare Rib* was banned in the South of Ireland for containing pictures of women's vaginas and it is reasonable to suppose that censorship would be used for similar sexually and politically repressive purposes in Britain.

Therefore taking on pornography means challenging the very ideas of a sexually exploitative society. We are confronting the sexist double standard which, while condemning acts of violence, in fact ideologically validates them. There are no easy roads to this. Although there are broad areas of agreement on images that are degrading to women, sexuality is still a very controversial issue within the women's movement. Among the left also there has been little discussion. A debate must take place between the left and feminists on these issues to win the widest support for a campaign which will successfully challenge sexist images.

The problem of sexism

One of the preconditions for such a campaign is an analysis of the material basis of sexism. It is recognised by most feminists that men benefit materially from women's oppression. It has even been acknowledged by the state in the passing of the Equal Opportunities Act — ensuring that even the bourgeoisie recognise the material privileges of men. Wages, jobs and domestic servicing are the most obvious features but these material interests rest deeper. Men benefit by participating in the determinants not only of their own sexuality but also that of women through the perspective of male dominance.

While it is widely accepted that benefits accrue to men, it appears to be disputed by some on the left that these benefits constitute material interests. As Marxist-feminists we do not accept that the ideology of sexism/male dominance is just 'false consciousness' floating in the air. If this were so all that would be needed to remove and eradicate it would be dispute, debate and education: but the ideology is rooted in very real and concrete material concerns which determine and feed these ideas. If we do not acknowledge that material interests generate these ideas, we will create over-optimism about how the oppression can be destroyed.

We would argue that men have to develop a class interest which overrides their immediate sectional interests. This raises the question of class consciousness — a consciousness which will fight for the liberation of the class — men and the majority of the class — women. We know that the creation of socialism

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carries no guarantee of women's liberation and so we must struggle now for that consciousness — recognising it will be a struggle within the labour movement precisely because *class interest* will conflict with *present material interests* — and in that struggle must be raised the central question of women's liberation in the liberation of the working class.

The next step

The women's movement has been successful in making feminist issues like abortion a campaign of the labour movement, by raising and arguing for support in working class organisations. The task will be harder with a campaign on pornography as it will have to confront areas of male privilege which have been regarded by men and sections of the left as matters of private concern, or worse of little importance. Responses will be extreme as Arthur Scargill's pathetic attempt to defend page 3 in *The Yorkshire Miner* demonstrated.

Many people who are opposed to censorship believe that intervention by feminists against pornography is merely another form of censorship. We must point out that there is a difference between handing out leaflets which explain the sexist content of, for instance, a film and demanding that such a film be banned. Spontaneous reactions from women to vandalise cinemas that show films like *Dressed to Kill* reveal the deep outrage of feminists, and focus attention on these issues. We must argue that actions such as these should be aimed at eliminating the demand for such films, not demands for censorship.

Raising these issues in the labour movement will be hard work but small beginnings have been made already. The recently launched paper *The East End News* has a strong anti-sexist editorial policy. The Campaign For Press Freedom is another area in which feminists are able to argue against sexist bias. The anonymous producers of hard core porn are harder to identify and probably will continue to receive the occasional broken window and well aimed tin of paint. Meanwhile we must involve in our discussions and campaigns women who work as strippers, models and prostitutes. At a recent Equity AGM a proposal to support the unionisation of strippers was passed.

There are many questions which should be taken up in the unions: the question of sexual harassment at work, sexist and titillating material in the media. Discussions between the trade unions and the women's movement will be essential for the success of these campaigns.

More importantly, there is a long way to go to uncover precisely what form non-exploitative, warm loving relations will take, and we can only say at this point that they will not be developed through societies with inequalities structured into them. To get there we need non-sexist sexual images — a lot more of them: perhaps feminist sexuality would confront misogyny with new images. If we can withstand the forces that seek to dominate erotica — misogyny on the one hand and right-wing sexual repression on the other — we may be able to embark on an 'inhibited beginning'.

Postscript

Our own determination to fight back can be witnessed by the debates that are now taking place in the WLM, by the actions of those women who take on the local porn merchants, and who organise pickets and more direct action. For many of us who grew up in the '50s and '60s, there is now an increasing awareness that under the banner of sexual liberation when the right to have sexual relationships outside the family was being contested, we assumed the position of 'sexually liberated' women by taking on the visions of 'liberation' that were largely determined by men. 'The good screw', 'exciting', 'the independence of sleeping around'. What were not being contested in that period, were the definitions of sexuality and sexual activity that women were tacitly agreeing to. Marge Piercy in *Vida* writes of the pressure that was placed upon Lohania to sleep with Randy, a comrade whom the group were wanting to integrate into their organisation. This appropriation of women's sexual identity in order to 'bring people closer to the

Meanwhile at the 'soft' end of the market *Playboy* has been a target for attack by American feminists since 1969. In its desire to be the 'liberator' of women an article was commissioned by the magazine in that year. The article was to be 'fair, objective...in a tone that is amused but never snide', according to the editor. Hefner however had other ideas. In a confidential memo he wrote: 'These chicks are our natural enemy....It is time we did battle with them....what I want is a devastating piece that takes these militant feminists apart. They are unalterably opposed to the romantic boy-girl society that *Playboy* promotes....Let's get to it and make it a real winner.'

organisation', has not been unknown to the left in Britain in the past.

Throughout the last ten years the women's movement, divided as it may sometimes appear to men outside, has a real unity in its assertions about female sexuality. It has insisted on the right of women to determine their own sexuality; the right of women to explore and construct female sexuality in a way that is hostile and aggressive towards the images of female sexuality that have been constructed under a patriarchal form of society.

Many thanks to all the women who contributed to this article.

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THE 1981 MINERS' STRIKE

BY BILL ALDER

Once again it was the miners who gave a decisive lead to the whole working class in their strike action last February to save jobs. They demonstrated that the Tories could be beaten through militant action. In the first of our regular features on the situation in industry Bill Alder analyses the significance of the February events and the prospects for the left in the miners' union.

The National Coal Board (NCB) began to reveal its plans for colliery closures on Friday 13 February. By the following Wednesday 23 pits had been named — a handful each in South Wales, Scotland and the North East, and individual pits in the Stafford, Lancashire, Kent, Warwick and Nottingham coal-fields. The NCB claimed that some pits were on the verge of exhaustion (eg Hapton Valley in Lancashire and New Hucknall in Nottinghamshire), whilst others were being closed simply because they were big 'loss-makers' (the Welsh pits).

The basis for the closures was the change from the 'output-target' system of the Plan for Coal agreement between the last Labour government, the NCB and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), and the 'finance-target' system of the Tories' 1980 Coal Industry Act.

The response of miners at the threatened Coegnant colliery in South Wales was an *immediate* walk-out. The South Wales NUM area executive was forced to bring forward a delegate conference from Wednesday 18 February to the Monday. The delegates voted *unanimously* for a total shutdown throughout the South Wales area. The 25,000 Welsh colliers responded as one, despite a threat from the NUM president Gormley that they were acting unconstitutionally.

By Wednesday all three Kent collieries were on strike, along with several Scottish pits, four pits in the north east, two in the western area NCB, High Moor colliery in north Derbyshire and 5,000 Yorkshire miners. In all, about 20 per cent of the NUM's membership were involved in some form of action, with Yorkshire, Scotland and Derbyshire areas (around 100,000 miners altogether) pledged to a total strike from Monday 23 February. Nottinghamshire area executive had called a delegate conference for Saturday 21 February, which, despite the area's 'moderate' reputation, was expected to call some form of strike action.

So it looked certain that *over one-half* of the NUM's quarter million members would be on strike even *before* any national strike ballot. In these circumstances the NUM national executive scheduled for Thursday 19 February would have had no option but to support strike action and call a national ballot, leading to a national strike within two weeks. By mid-week rail, steel and transport union leaders had already pledged their support in the event of a national strike.

On the evening of Monday 16 February David Howell, the Tory Secretary for Energy, sent the NUM and NCB a letter offering to meet them the following Monday. But within 24 hours it was clear that this would almost certainly be too late for anyone — Howell, NCB chief Ezra, or Gormley — to stop the drift towards a national strike.

The talks were hastily brought forward to the evening of Wednesday 18 February. At approximately 8.30 that evening television programmes were interrupted for an announcement that the NCB had withdrawn the closure plans and that the government was willing to discuss increased funding for the NCB and selective import controls on foreign coal.

The following day the NUM national executive voted by 15-8 to recommend a return to work. Executive members from Yorkshire, South Wales, Scotland and Kent argued for continuing the action until they received written guarantees from the NCB on closures, funding and import controls. Nevertheless by Saturday — having received 'further assurances' from the NCB — the former three area presidents were recommending a return to work. Kent area officials followed at the beginning of the next week. By Friday 27 February — two weeks after the strike action started — the miners were back at work in all the nation's coal-fields.

The crisis of the coal industry

The economic recession means a fall in the demand for coal from both private and state-run industry running into millions of tonnes. The decision of Bower-Scott to close its paper mill at Ellesmere Port has meant the loss of 200,000 tonnes of coal per year. The cut-backs in production by the British Steel Corporation also reduces demand for coal by hundreds of thousands of tonnes. In July 1980, power station coal stocks were 3.2 million tonnes above their level one year previously. If no-one wants to buy coal, then it is obviously difficult for collieries to be 'profitable'.

High interest rates mean that the NCB will pay around £237 million to the big finance houses for the financial year 1980-81 (ie. £1,000 per working miner). And whatever the government's immediate proposals for emergency funding of the NCB (£200/600m has been mentioned) it still plans to phase out operating and regional grants by 1983-84. (Had the Labour Party remained in office, these were projected to average over £170m per year for the years 1980-84.)

Given these conditions and policies, it is most unlikely that the Tories' financial targets can be met by the NCB, whatever 'tinkering' with the system there may be. The NCB, by all accounts, still holds to the project of a far smaller number of 'super-pits'. This would enable them to maintain almost the same level of output but to employ many less miners. This thinking was behind the proposal to merge Hucknall and Babbington collieries in South Nottinghamshire.

The government and the NCB are already seeking to claw back the ground won by the miners in February. Within days of the strikes ending, the papers gave front page coverage to a redundancy payment scheme, allegedly giving miners taking voluntary redundancy 'up to' £42,000. This was a classic management confidence trick. The figure included all state benefits and NCB pensions/allowances to which miners would be entitled anyway.

Moreover, the scheme contained clauses specifying that applicants for the top money had to have *averaged* at least £140 per week pay in the period leading up to their voluntary redundancy. Other clauses specified that applicants had to have been face workers for a longer period than most men manage. One informed NUM member told me that should his pit be approached with the redundancy scheme, *no one* would receive anything like £42,000 and the top payments would more likely be in the region of £8,000.

Nevertheless, with massive media backing, this will probably be the NCB's strategy in the coming months and years: make a big song and dance about supposedly high redundancy payments, claim that selected pits are nearing exhaustion and take them on one by one (with a 'decent' time interval in between). This would mean comparatively few *enforced* redundancies for miners already in the industry: some would be tempted by the voluntary redundancy scheme (mainly older men); others could be redeployed.

What it would mean is the massacre of *future* jobs for youth in mining areas, the destruction of mining communities whose pits were declared 'uneconomic', and the strengthening of the notion of miners as industrial gypsies who can be shuttled

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around the country to meet the needs of the NCB and the capitalist economy.

Why did it happen?

Some sections of the media have suggested that the whole of the miners' February action may have been a put-up job. The schema is as follows: the NCB heads knew that they couldn't meet the government's financial targets; so they provoked the NUM in such a way that they knew massive resistance would emerge; this would frighten the Tories into granting the Board more cash. Gormley himself suggested this in an interview with the *Daily Mail*.

This is unlikely, to put it mildly. The boosting of militancy resulting from successful industrial action not only strengthens the NUM against the NCB, but also the left within the NUM. Neither of these developments are in the interest of Ezra and his cronies — even if they coincidentally got the NCB off the hook of the Treasury's financial restrictions in the short term.

More likely, the Tories and the NCB had grown overconfident. The Board had seen a majority of NUM members accept what was effectively a 9 per cent offer in the previous wage agreement. The Tories had succeeded in defeating the trade union movement on issues such as the victimisation of Derek Robinson in British Leyland and the run-down of the steel industry. Relying on Gormley's ability to hinder any fight-back, the Tories were keen to hammer home their attack on the working class. Evidently, they were *not* prepared for a pitched battle with the class's strongest regiment. But they may well have been confident in Gormley, the other right-wing tops of the Triple Alliance — Sirs (ISTC) and Weighell (NUR) — and Chapple's (EETPU) control over many power station workers — to sabotage any effective resistance. They were wrong.

Not only did the miners respond quickly and militantly to the NCB's threats, but rank and file transport workers, rail and steel workers showed a willingness to take solidarity action before their own leaders were able to sabotage the developing dispute. With the water workers and the civil service unions threatening national action, the Tories had to suddenly re-adjust their line. Questioned on the TV programme 'World at One' on why the government had not 'stood up' to the miners, Trade Minister Biffen (a close co-thinker of Thatcher in the Cabinet) replied: 'I didn't come into politics to be a kamikazi pilot.'

The miners' victory showed the weakness and divisions within the ruling class. Faced by an economic crisis of massive proportions, the capitalists and their parliamentary lap-dogs cannot reach full agreement. They agree that to resolve the crisis in favour of the banks and big business it is necessary to inflict a decisive defeat on the organised labour movement. But *how* to do this is a different matter.

Secondly, the February actions showed that, despite setbacks, the organised muscle of the working class had not been completely tamed. The action of the miners, and before them the Gardners' occupation, and the Liverpool and London dockers' defence of jobs, showed vividly that workers were willing to take industrial action to defend their interests. The crucial question was that of *leadership*. Where a clear and militant lead has been given — by the South Wales miners in February — the union membership has not failed to respond.

The effects of the miners' victory

The miners' victory increased the confidence and willingness to fight of *all* workers, as it did following the NUM's struggle in 1972. And the same is true in the mining industry itself. For example, at Sherwood Colliery in Mansfield — a pit with no real tradition of militancy — there were two stoppages over pay and conditions within a month of the February victory.

But the 'moderate' majority on the union executive cannot

be relied upon to combat the NCB's new tactics of picking off individual pits and voluntary redundancy schemes. It is after all the same 'moderate' majority that agreed the productivity bonus scheme with the last Labour government, which more than anything else divided the miners' ranks, particularly their capacity to organise united wages struggles.

Nor are the NUM 'lefts' without their problems. Scargill's January ballot of his members helped pave the way for the successful strike in February, but when the Welsh miners struck he still argued for deferring Yorkshire's solidarity action till Monday 23 February. The NUM left is politically weak. Its leading figures — Scargill, McGahey, Williams and Collins — are either members of the Communist Party or influenced by its demand for import controls as the basic solution to the crisis of the British coal industry.

The NCB is quite happy to place the blame for the problems of British miners on their Polish, American or German counterparts. That draws attention away from the massive interest repayments the NCB makes to the banks, the blood-sucking of the nationalised coal industry by private equipment suppliers and coal product firms like Coalite, and the chaos of capitalist production for profit not social need.

Nevertheless for many miners the February action confirmed what they had learnt in 1972 and 1974 — that only militant action brings results. The clear difference in attitude of the 'moderates' and militants on the national executive and area leaderships towards such action — Gormley warning against it, the left backing the miners already out and organising solidarity action — has not been missed by the NUM membership. This can only strengthen the left at every level — from the pit, branch and area level to the NUM conference and the forthcoming presidential elections.

Scargill's campaign for the presidency is linked into the broader changes taking place in the labour movement. He frequently appears on the same platform as Tony Benn, attracting large audiences as in Mansfield in March when 600 miners and Labour Party members turned up to hear them. Scargill is also speaking on a wide range of issues. He recently addressed a rally to commemorate the defeat of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. This can only deepen awareness among miners of the need for broad political solutions to the crisis of the industry.

The Benn/Scargill axis also tends to undermine the traditional division of labour between the 'political' and 'economic' wings of the workers' movement. No longer is it left to Labour MPs to speak of politics in parliament while the unions bargain at the point of production. The unions can and should speak out on political matters, as Scargill does on disarmament, and as Joe Whelan, general secretary of Nottingham NUM, did at a May Day rally when he attacked Labour's spokesperson on Ireland, Don Concannon, for his statements on the Republican hunger strikes. Equally Labour Party members can and should campaign for socialist candidates in the unions like Bob Wright in the engineering union and Scargill in the NUM.

Scargill appears increasingly likely to be elected president when Gormley retires next year. Few miners, whatever their political convictions, are enthused at the prospect of having his right wing opponent Trevor Bell, leader of the clerical section COSA, as their leader. Even the right wing former Nottingham NUM leader Len Clarke has called for support for Scargill, coupled with a campaign to make him 'moderate' his behaviour!

Hopefully the NUM left won't take the easy option and wage a 'don't vote for a clerk' campaign. Scargill's campaign should be used to arm the membership with economic and political arguments to defend their jobs, wages and conditions against the Tory/NCB plans. It should also be used to build the campaign to get rid of the Tory government and the crazy capitalist system they defend.

THE CRISIS OF PROFESSIONALISM IN ART

BY PETER FULLER

Modern art has lost its way: it is produced and consumed by a tiny minority with decreasing social and political impact. The following article by Peter Fuller, based on a speech he gave to a conference of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1978, takes up the crisis in art. Although three years old the article has fully retained its relevance.

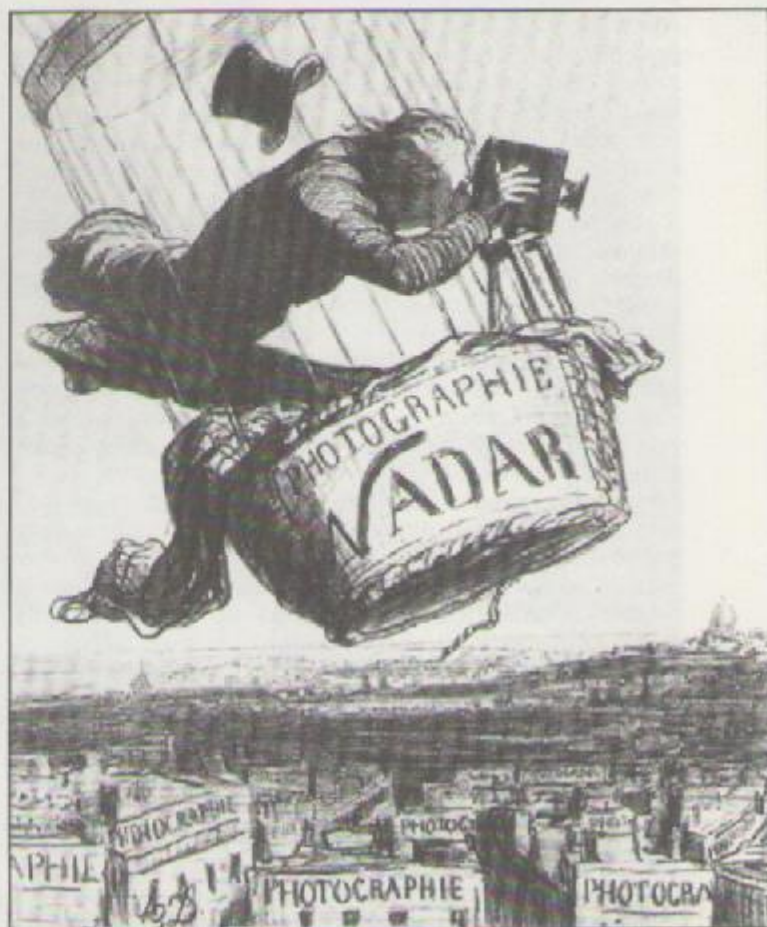
In 1963 Robyn Denny, among others, signed a letter to *The Sunday Times* attacking amateur artists. It began: 'a professional painter is one whose profession is painting'. Fifteen years later, even that is questionable. Of course, the apparatus of a profession — including professors, Royal Colleges, institutes, academies, journals, and above all a nation-wide network of training schools — persists. What then is missing?

Before we can answer this, we must go back into history. The category of the professional artist, as distinct from the master craftsman, is relatively new. It did not become clear in Europe until the 17th century, or in some places until much later. This distinction may not be absolutely clear in each specific instance: but it is of very great importance. John Berger has written: 'The craftsman survives so long as the standards for judging his work are shared by different classes. The professional appears when it is necessary for the craftsman to leave his class and "emigrate" to the ruling class, whose standards of judgement are different.'

Professional artists have related to the class that ruled, or aspired to rule, in many complicated ways which have varied from society to society, and from artist to artist within the same society. One thing has remained constant. Until our own time, the professional has become a professional *through his specialised training*, through which he acquired the skilful use of a particular set of pictorial (or sculptural) conventions: conventions of composition, drawing, perspective, anatomy, pose, symbolism, and so on. These conventions corresponded closely to the social experience, the literal *point of view*, of the class which the professional was serving. The transition from the shallow, pictorial space of high feudalism to vanishing point perspective, which was perfected in the bourgeois era, was not just a development inherent to art. As the ruling ideas of an era are the ideas of its ruling class, so that class's way of seeing and representing the world determines the dominant character of the era's visual tradition. But professional conventions were never taught as historically transient modes: instead, they were held up to be the *only* way of recording universal, Eternal Truth.

But John Berger has remarked that to those classes which did not rule, such professional painting appeared to be 'so remote from their own experience that they saw it as a mere social convention, an *accoutrement* of the class that ruled over them: which is why, in moments of revolt, painting and sculpture were often destroyed.'

In Britain an indigenous, professional, Fine Art tradition did not emerge until very late by European standards. The reasons for this are complex. They lie partly in the puritanical aspect of the British Reformation, but more significantly in the character of the English Revolution of the 17th century. This completed the precocious destruction of feudalism in England.



Nadar elevating photography to the height of art, 1862. Honoré Daumier

The great land-owners were free to annihilate the peasantry through enclosure, and to establish capitalism throughout rural England long before it grew up in the towns. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries these agrarian capitalists comprised a ruling class the like of which arose nowhere else in Europe. They 'patronised' artists directly, and the art of the time is bound up with their world view, depicting the land, live-stock and country houses. Many preferred, as had the Stuart kings before them, to import foreign painters who had been apprenticed in European studios.

The modern professional tradition did not emerge until the mid-18th century, when this class lost its *exclusive* hegemony. An open market in pictures was then established, providing apparent 'professional independence' from *specific* patrons; a training school opened offering an alternative to the old master-pupil system. Artists' professional organisations sprang up. The Royal Academy, founded in 1768, quickly acquired a monopoly over both the market (through its annual selling exhibitions) and education (through its schools). Thus it dominated the profession as a whole until the late 19th century. The Royal Academy was more than an artists' salon: it provides the clue to the true secret of 'the Englishness of English art'.

The new 'modern', professional Fine Art tradition had been thrown up by the upsurge of a mercantile and emergent industrial bourgeoisie: and yet within it no new way of seeing the social or material worlds developed. Far from trumpeting the industrial revolution which the bourgeoisie was effecting, artists referred to it, if at all, obliquely through apocalyptic art. Landscape, and the genres associated with the old agrarian interests thrived, and even reached unprecedented levels of development. Why?

The class which entered upon the titanic enterprise of the industrial revolution in Britain did not have to overthrow an

Culture

Ancien Regime. The prior, land-owning class was *already capitalist*. British bourgeois intellectuals thus failed to produce a new global vision of the world; British painters developed no new way of seeing or depicting it, appropriate to a historically triumphant middle-class. Instead artists clung as long as they could to the old agrarian genres, which appealed to the landowners and industrialists alike.

Of course, there were tensions between the old agrarian capitalists and the new middle-classes, tensions which I believe distantly subtend the great efflorescence of empirical landscape painting in the early 19th century. But, by the middle of the 19th century, the two classes had fused into a single hegemonic bloc, peppered with all sorts of anachronistic, political, social and cultural excrescences — like a monarchy, a House of Lords, and a Royal Academy — which were the inheritance of a peculiar history. It was this bizarre, even if globally and historically successful, class which mid-19th century professional artists served so well. Indeed, their history had been such that the professional painters *could not* challenge it. They depicted the world from the ruling classes' point of view without so much as straining the professional conventions in which they had been trained. (This accounts for the peculiarly *surrealist* quality of Victorian painting when seen today.)

In England, there could be no radical, bourgeois art. 1848 in Europe formed Daumier, Millet and Courbet, who forced academic conventions to the utmost to make them speak of the experience of peasants and workers, of which they had not been designed to speak. Theirs were glorious failures. 1848 in England produced only the whimpering, retrospective fart of Pre-Raphaelitism. Without even having to think about it, mid-19th century English professionals knew what they had to produce, how they had to produce it, and for whom. Criticism was straightforward. Has this painter acquired sufficient technical skills? Has he applied them to an appropriate subject, from an appropriate ideological point of view? Yes, and he was a good artist; no, and he was bad.

Let us desert these Victorian painters at the high point of professionalism, and return to our opening question. What is missing from contemporary professional practice? A recent sociological study reported: 'Half the tutors and approaching two-thirds of the students of certain art colleges agreed with the proposition that art cannot be taught.' Understandably, the authors then asked: 'In what sense then are the tutors tutors, the students students, and the colleges colleges? What if any definitionally valid educational processes take place on pre-diploma and diploma courses?' Smart questions. The authors reported that nearly all tutors 'rejected former academic criteria and modalities in art', but none had any other conventions to take their place.

When Andrew Forge tried to define painting for his *British Painting 1974* exhibition, he came up with 'coloured flat surfaces'. This definition is so general that it could include as paintings, a table-cloth, a field, bathroom mats, linoleum, a lawn, tiles and the living-room wall. Even so, it leaves out much modern painting, which is not flat, more which is not coloured, and a fair amount which is neither coloured nor flat. I'm not blaming Forge. A better definition is not possible. Because there are no longer any clients for whom the Fine Artists' professional skills are *necessary*, there is no agreed set of pictorial skills and conventions which the student artist can acquire to carry out a definite social function. We have the skeletal apparatus of a profession, but not the profession itself. We have entered the epilogue of a way of making visual images which characterised some societies for about three centuries, but which is now being swept away by history.

Some people have tried to correlate the decadence of the Fine Art traditions with 'the crisis of capitalism'. Douglas Cooper has accused the Tate — over bricks and blankets — of

wasting public money on 'the freaks and follies which are being passed off as creative art during the last decades of the capitalist era.' It would be nice if he was right. But, even if the archaic structures of the existing British state are teetering, monopoly capitalism has good reason to feel, if not complacent, then reasonably confident about its survival in the *immediate* future. These commentators are simply failing to consider the visual tradition *as a whole*.

If we wanted to estimate the strength of any European, early feudal society, we would be very foolish to do so, say, through its free-standing easel paintings in oils alone. We would not find *any*; yet the chances would be that both the visual tradition, and the society which contained it, were strong: its art would have been expressed through manuscript illumination, stained glass windows, wall-paintings and perhaps tapestries.

It is just as absurd to assess capitalist society, today, through its Fine Art traditions of paintings and sculpture *alone*. We are surrounded by more visual images than appeared in any previous society in history: they comprise a torrential mega-visual tradition (of which the Fine Art traditions constitute only the tiniest component) of TV, cinema, newsphotography, colour supplements, reproductions of all kinds, but, more especially, the giant bill-boards and road posters of commercial advertising. This great stream belches down upon us everywhere we go, every minute of every day.

Sadly, this voluminous mega-visual tradition attests to the unnerving health of international monopoly capitalism. This mega-visual tradition has also given rise to new professionals, just as slavish and unquestioning in the service of the monopolists as their predecessors, the 19th century painters, were in the service of *their* ruling class. William Frith made a painting of *Derby Day* in 1858, the culmination of 15 months incessant labour. He employed a whole team to produce it including around 100 models, a photographer who took pictures on the race-course for him, and J Herring, a specialist, who painted in the horses. So many people thronged the picture when it was first shown that a special rail was put round it. Frith then issued a popular print which sold in tens of thousands.

That makes us smile because a modernist painter like Hoyland dashes off a new work and gives it the name of the date on which it was painted, because it is about nothing, except painting itself, and sells it overseas before it has been seen by anyone in England. A reproduction of it would be lucky to sell 20 copies here. But the techniques used to make the Frith painting have not disappeared: advertising images are produced with the same infinite care, marshalling of resources and personnel, and with the same intention of mass reproduction. Indeed, so close are they that the Frith painting has been used — without alteration — as a bill-board for the *Sunday Times*. Of course, advertising posters present a different point of view (that of the monopolists) and serve a different social function (they offer promises rather than mirrors). But they, rather than modernist painting, are in the direct line of development from 19th century professionalism.

Indeed, it is within the mega-visual tradition that all the *visual* advances are being made. At the Royal Academy today they are queuing not for Motherwell, not for Courbet, not even for Leonardo — but for the *hologram* exhibition. And in one sense, they are right: as fully three-dimensional images holograms undoubtedly constitute the biggest advance in the representation of the visible world since photography. And yet even at this stage, holograms are sponsored by Guinness: their *future* can easily be discerned in their present appearances. They are, if you like, the 'moments of becoming' of yet another great leap forward by the spectacular entertainers, popular pornographers, and, above all, advertisers. One thing is certain: in ten years time, fifty-foot, three-dimensional images of Guinness



Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and his family, 1865-7. Gustave Courbet

ness bottles, detergent boxes, and cigarette packs will hang in the sky all the way down the Thames.

You may not relish this thought: it drives me to despair. But suppose that you were looking back on these times from the future. Who would you take as being more representative of the visual tradition *as a whole*, and of the kind of society from which it springs: the professionals of the residual Fine art traditions, with their piles of bricks, 'pure' colour formalist paintings, folded blankets, and grey monochromes, including if you like, their board-room portraits, and wild life pictures; or the spectacularly versatile new professionals of the mega-visual tradition, who have unleashed into the night sky enormous three-dimensional images of consumer goods? In the 19th century, the Fine Art professionals were the exclusive producers of the visual tradition. Today, their total output constitutes nothing but a culturally marginal and contingent moment within it. The future *seems* to lie with the mega-visual professionals. Fine Artists play with their pasts.

The only mystery is, why do we have even an apparatus of a profession? Why have Fine Artists survived, at all? The answer is largely political. The modern welfare state was erected immediately after the last war. John Maynard Keynes had advocated increased intervention by the state in the economy to ameliorate some of the most 'unacceptable' effects of capitalism, especially periodic deep recession, and unemployment. Keynes also described the mechanisms through which this could be effected. In the short-term, Keynesianism as applied by politicians seemed to work: by the late 1950s the ruling class was euphoric about full employment, indefinitely rising material standards of living, and an eternal, well-regulated,

future for capitalism. Today, of course, Keynesianism is in ruins. The Arts Council, established in 1945, was one of the first components of the welfare state. Its architect, and first chairperson, was Keynes himself. Married to a ballerina, a Bloomsbury habitué, he had spoken of the prostitution of the arts for financial gain as 'one of the worse crimes of present-day capitalism.' In the welfare state, all that was going to change.

In 1945 Keynes wrote: 'The purpose of the Arts Council... is to create an environment, to breed a spirit, to cultivate an opinion, to offer a stimulus to such purpose that the artist and the public can each sustain and live on each other in that union which has occasionally existed in the past at the great ages of a communal civilized life.' But the Arts Council was also to differ from any previous patron, state or otherwise. It would not commission, or offer any direction whatever. Keynes said he thought that everyone knew that the work of the artist was by its very nature 'individual and free, undisciplined, unregimented, uncontrolled'.

He claimed: 'The artist walks where his spirit leads him. He cannot be told his direction; he does not know it himself.' But he expected new work to 'spring up more abundantly in unexpected quarters and in unforeseen shapes when there is a universal opportunity for contact with traditional and contemporary arts in their noblest form.' The Arts Council was, for the visual arts, only the tip of an iceberg of state patronage of this 'hands off' kind, patronage which included museums, later regional arts associations, and above all, the enormous, expanding art education system.

There is no doubt whatever that the thinking behind this experiment was political. Robyn Denny has elsewhere described the CIA involvement in the early Abstract Expressionist movement. Similarly the initiation of a golden age of 'individual and free' artists, sponsored but not directed by the state, was intended to cock a God Almighty snook at the miserable Socialist Realist system in the USSR. As Gombrich put it speaking of Socialist Realism: 'This attempt to control the arts from above has made us all aware of the real blessings we owe to our freedom.' But the arts policy of the welfare state back-fired on those who devised it. The *real* comparison was between Socialist Realism, and advertising in the West — between the roles of their respective, culturally central visual professionals. And of course those roles were not so very different. Sure, the Socialist Realists were ruthlessly 'controlled from above': but so were all our artists working for the great monopolies, and their agencies. Which is the bigger lie, to paint the joys of an oppressed Soviet proletariat? Or to make an image to be seen by countless millions suggesting that drinking Coke rather than Pepsi contributes to world peace? There is little to choose.

Meanwhile, our Fine Art professionals find that they have been given every freedom except the only one that matters, *the freedom to act socially*. Levi-Strauss once called non-representational painting: 'A school of academic painting in which each artist strives to represent the manner in which he would execute his pictures if by chance he were to paint any.' Is it surprising that this has been the dominant form of our so-called 'individual and free' artists in Britain and America?

What is to be done? For me, the position is clear. These curious, quirkish anachronisms, the Fine Art traditions of painting and sculpture and the whole professional apparatus which attaches to them, are now vulnerable because their political usefulness has expired. They are becoming an embarrassment to that class which once had such high hopes of them. *They must be defended, and preserved, at all costs. Why?* Because only here it seems to me is there even the remotest hope of visual truthfulness and imaginative creativity emerging again. It will not come from the Socialist Realist system, or from the modern advertisers. But, in order for this to happen within the professional Fine Art traditions, artists, supported by critics, must begin to demand the right to *act socially again*. That is why the recent efflorescence of mural painting the length and breadth of Britain seems to me so important. Not so much for anything which has yet been achieved, as for the potentialities — unprecedented in the last 20 years — which it is opening up.

But to individual professional Fine Artists, I would say this: in the past, there were two ways of making great paintings. Those who took the first route sought the fullest expression of the possibilities inherent in existing bourgeois pictorial conventions. Vermeer's, and Van Dyck's sumptuous work was achieved in this way. But even more challenging was the course followed by those who sought to develop or strain those conventions in such a way that they spoke of experiences of the visible world, and of social life, which had hitherto been excluded from painting because they were opposed to the point of view its conventions had been designed to express. This was the route taken by Goya, Courbet, Millet, Daumier, Gericault, Hals and Van Gogh. Both alternatives relied on a vigorous, culturally central, Fine Art tradition. Because capitalism has finally destroyed the traditions of Fine Art which it created, or inherited, neither of these alternatives is now possible.

But this is not to advocate despair. If you are a socialist, you do not believe that you have to choose between Stalinism, on the one hand, and Monopoly Capitalism on the other. You are prepared to work, through history, for a third alternative, that of genuine socialism. Few now believe that this will be magically created through inexorable, inevitable historical processes alone. Yet genuine socialism is a *possible future*. Holograms clearly show us what our highly probable future in the immediate short-term under Monopoly Capitalism will be like.

If you wish to create significant work today, I believe that you have to create a visual moment of becoming, which speaks of those unrealised human potentialities which will be realised in the possible future of socialism. Your visual equivalent of that future will keep alive a flicker of hope for it in a seemingly hopeless present. 'But', I am always asked, 'what does a moment of becoming look like?' It is not a question of style; it has nothing to do with overt political content. It is hard to be exact, because such work has not yet been realised visually, though plenty of artists seem to me, despite inevitable contradictions — we are all in unknown territory — to be pushing forwards in this direction.

When I have been able to recognise this, I have acclaimed them and will continue to do so. But I am not a Stalinist. I refuse to prescribe. What I can do is to urge artists to avoid the waste-land of imitating 19th century academicism; to reject the Socialist Realist solution, once again being pushed so hard by Stalinist elements; to turn away from arid formalism, and post-modernist antics alike, and *to dare to take their standards from this possible future*. Historically, you are in a unique position. Seize the time!



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